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BINA GUPTA

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CONSCIOUSNESS

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Bina Gupta

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To Swati,
the actualization of
my dreams and more

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Preface

The book is an attempt to understand the conceptions of consciousness in Indian philosophy. I became interested in this work, while working on my book, *The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology* (Northwestern University Press, 1998), which is primarily devoted to Advaita Vedānta. I, however, should add that its focus is chiefly, though not exclusively, on the Vivaraṇa School of Advaita Vedānta. It attempts to unfold the Advaita Vedānta phenomenology of the levels of consciousness. An important part of this phenomenology of consciousness is that, at a certain level, consciousness is simply a witness to its own operations and divergent modes. My goal in *The Disinterested Witness* was not to lay down the entire theory of consciousness in Advaita Vedānta, but only a part of it, namely, the idea of a consciousness or a level of consciousness which simply witnesses, without getting involved in, the ongoing process of experience. So, I call this phenomenology a 'fragment'. Soon after I completed this book, I realized that the larger picture of 'consciousness' in the entire spectrum of Indian philosophy had yet to be worked out. Thus the transition to the investigation of the general conception of consciousness seemed natural and inevitable. Accordingly, the general spectrum of the theory of consciousness is the focal point of this work.

Two additional factors inspired me to undertake this work. First, the contemporary Western philosophical scene has generated a lot of excitement and debates on the philosophical problems of consciousness. Consciousness has been a continuing cornerstone of recent continental philosophy. Husserlians have made it one of their central themes. Heideggerians have challenged its centrality, and deconstructionists have sought to deconstruct the metaphysics of presence on which consciousness philosophies are based. Second, I was also inspired by the new interest in 'consciousness research' by the brain sciences and analytic thinkers. It seemed to me that these philosophers who are most seriously engaged in thinking about consciousness may find the thoughts

of the Indian philosophers useful and interesting, even though they may not accept these ideas in their entirety.

The Sanskrit term for consciousness is '*cit*'. I presume sceptics, historicists, cultural relativists, and their kin would debate ad nauseum, whether *cit* can really be translated as 'consciousness'. I do not believe that there is anything like exact translation, nor do I believe that the entire content of a concept is inaccessible to those who are outside of its original home. '*Cit*' and 'consciousness' have enough of common content to warrant treating them as synonyms without any anxiety. I treat them so.

In reading this book, my readers must keep the following points in mind. First, this book, like *The Disinterested Witness*, has not been written from a historical perspective. My concern has been philosophical, better yet, conceptual. Second, my interpretation is based upon my understanding of the classical sources in Indian philosophy. In giving these interpretations, I have tried to be faithful to the Indian tradition in order to enable my readers to have an accurate and authentic understanding of the various theories of consciousness. Third, I have also made comparisons with Western theories, where I thought such comparisons would be conducive to understanding the conceptions of consciousness not only for my Western readers but also for the non-Western readers. Fourth, my attempt in this work cannot be separated from my own attempt to develop a theory of consciousness to my satisfaction.

It hardly needs to be said that my theory of consciousness is Advaitic in its general features. I am convinced that no system of philosophy in the West or the East has thought so deeply on the nature of consciousness as the Vedānta has. This book clearly demonstrates that there exists an amazing variety of the conceptions of consciousness in Indian philosophy. These conceptions developed within a period of about 1500 years, and contain very sophisticated arguments and counter-arguments that were advanced by the defenders of each thesis and its opponents.

I need not also apologize or warn the readers of my Vedāntic proclivity. My philosophical concern, not only in this book, but in general, has been to comprehend and interpret Vedāntic thought and to assimilate it into my own thinking as a philosopher. Non-dualistic Vedānta has been for me an amazing case of a sublime metaphysical system, subtle logical discursivity, and detailed phenomenological description. In this book, I locate Advaita in the context of Indian philosophical discourse from within which it arose and which in turn it enriched.

I am aware that there remain many philosophical questions about consciousness in general and Indian thought in particular, which I have not answered to my satisfaction. The concluding chapter of this work raises some of these questions and provides some insights into how my readers might proceed to answer them. Philosophy, as its practitioners well know, is both an exhilarating and an arduous enterprise. In the ancient discipline of *darśana*, even to be able to take one new step forward should be a matter of satisfaction, given that the philosophers belonging to these *darśana*s not only thoroughly and rigorously formulated and defended their own positions, but also criticized the opponent's theses. If this work challenges my readers, and in so doing provides further impetus for research, I shall have succeeded in my efforts.

1

Introduction

Anybody mildly familiar with the contemporary philosophico-psychological scene is well aware that recent times have produced a lot of excitement and debate about the nature and function of consciousness. Perhaps, it is not an exaggeration to say that there is no other phenomenon besides consciousness that is more familiar and yet more elusive to any theoretical account which would satisfy scholars of all persuasions. As soon as one tries to give an account of consciousness within any one theory, one finds almost insuperable difficulties. The very idea of being familiar with consciousness provides a testimony to its existence. Augustine said of time that when one was not talking about it, one knew what it was, but when asked about it, he knew no longer.[1] What Augustine said about time is equally true of consciousness. It seems to be so ethereal, intangible, and deceptive that when one tries to take hold of it, it escapes one's grip.

Consciousness, as a subject of study, has had a roller coaster history. There is no other phenomenon in the history of philosophy or science for which the pendulum of recognition has swung to such extremes as it has for consciousness. Whereas many metaphysicians have found in it some clue to what they regard as the ultimate reality, natural scientists, on the other hand, have found it difficult to accommodate it within their scientific theories. After years of having been banished from scientific discourse and concern, consciousness seems to have found a newly respectable place among scientists and scientific philosophers during the past two decades. While not too long ago, consciousness was regarded by scientific philosophers as a mere epiphenomenon of matter—its reduction regarded as achievable—today, many serious scientists are looking for the origin and source of the phenomenon of consciousness. The attitude is now positive, more daring, less doctrinaire. These days, there is an upsurge of interest in consciousness in many scientific disciplines, for example, psychology, and the neurosciences. It is, under these changed circumstances, helpful to look at the nature of the concerns

for consciousness in some of the oldest philosophical traditions of the world, the Hindu and the Buddhist.

I

Consciousness in Indian Philosophy: A Historical Perspective

Indian thought shows a deep and continuing concern for the nature and function of consciousness (*cit*). The idea of consciousness or *cit* has played an important role in the Upaniṣads, if not in the Vedas. Since the time of the Upaniṣads, consciousness has been the fundamental concept of Indian thought. Consciousness first searched for the proper object of worship in a deity it sought for, to begin with, in the natural powers—fire, air, water, sun, rain, cloud, etc., which also symbolized different inner psychological powers, the powers of will, intellect, and moral purity, for example. It neither recognized itself as that which is being sought, nor recognized the double meaning, the external and the inner, the physical and the psychological, with which its poetic expressions played. This double path gave rise, on the one hand, to an elaborate ritual of sacrifices and, on the other, to a profoundly expanding as well as deepening inner experience of the inner self (ātman). Two paths opened up: the path of action (*pravṛtti*), of rites and rituals (leading to a structural scientificity of their own) and the path of non-action (*nivṛtti*), of contemplation on the nature of the self. Consciousness, which was searching for the proper object of worship, now turns to itself, the inner principle, which becomes the proper object of worship, and contemplation becomes worship.

The opposition between the inner and the outer deities, on the one hand, and the self (as the one inner principle) on the other, is sought to be reconciled by consciousness within itself, by proclaiming 'I am He, You are that Being',[2] and more metaphysically, the self is the absolute being (brahman). The unity of the two, the self and the reality, resulted in pure being, free from all determinations, indescribable by any concepts, or describable only by negations,[3] and symbolized by words such as 'Om'[4] and by deities. Religious life, with its deities, rites, and practices, receded to the background and retained only a symbolic significance.

The opposition between the two paths—one of action and the other of non-action—came to be reconciled in the ethical ideal of 'non-action in the midst of action'. The ethics of rites and rituals, of customary duties,

though not denied, was brought under the sovereign power of desirelessness, non-attachment and 'sense of equality' (*samatva*). But the customary ethics, the *Sittlichkeit* (which included the distinctions of caste, *varṇa*) remained alien to this sovereign power; it could neither be deduced from the supreme moral principle, nor could it be made compatible with that principle. Sense of equality could not accommodate the hierarchical distinctions. Some rituals were assigned a new symbolic significance, but such hermeneutic appropriation always left a recalcitrant remainder.

A new level of self-consciousness arose out of this challenge. Buddhism rejected large segments of that *Sittlichkeit*, brought non-attachment, without denying it, under the supreme virtue of 'compassion' (*karuṇā*), sought to achieve egolessness by dissolving the substantial ego into a stream of consciousness consisting of arising and perishing, tied together, not by an enduring substrate, but by a causal link and inherited traces, traces of traces ad infinitum. The Buddhist theory of consciousness itself developed through stages. In the absence of belief in an external world, consciousness—always hyletic—was given the power to objectify its inner representations which themselves arise by way of awakened traces and under the influence of a beginningless ignorance and the consequent 'desire' and 'craving'. In the course of developing this theory, Yogācāra Buddhism discovered the unconscious depository of past traces (*ālaya*). The Buddhists argued that freedom from desire leads to the dissolution of traces, leading to knowing things in their 'suchness', independently of all concepts and linguistic constructions.

The Buddhist theory, by a dialectical logic, led to the Advaita Vedānta theory of pure, undifferentiated, unchanging, eternal consciousness as the self which manifests all things, on which beginningless ignorance imposes the illusory names and forms of empirical world. A curious puzzle arose: how can this eternal unchanging self harbour within its being the ignorance which conceals its true nature? Could not ignorance be none other than the self's own creative energy, the power of endless self-differentiation, but not a power of generating illusions? Various schools of Vedānta developed these possibilities, but none exceeding Abhinavagupta[5] and Śrī Aurobindo in power. The latter two brought out the intimate connection between consciousness and time, between permanence and change, and between transcendence and immanence.

Did Advaita Vedānta always occupy the pre-eminent status in the Indian intellectual life as it has at least since the beginning of the twentieth

century? Various cultural influences account for the resurgence of Advaita. Lately, there seems to be a tendency on the part of highly sophisticated scientists and technologists to look for confirmation of Advaita in science. Some physicists in particular find messages in quantum physics, which seem to corroborate the Advaita thesis. Others find in Advaita a message of unity of all religions and a tolerance of diversity. My attitude towards such attempts is that they are based upon too hasty an inference and reveal a lack of careful thinking. Quantum physics, on a charitable idealistic interpretation, one may say, 'dematerializes' matter, but that does not tantamount to a philosophy which regards pure, undifferentiated consciousness alone as real. For quantum physics, the irreversible flow of time is real, and Advaita Vedānta, in order to be able to account for all phenomena, needs to have a theory of how—by what energy intrinsic to itself—*cit* differentiates itself into discrete events. Not Śaṃkara's Advaita, but the Śaivism of Abhinavagupta, it would seem, has the required conceptual tools. Abhinavagupta's philosophy of consciousness is a form of non-dualism, and thus, it is, in many respects, close to Śaṃkara's Advaita.[6] However, it is in Abhinavagupta's account, and not in Śaṃkara's Advaita, one finds the identification of *cit* with energy (*śakti*) and the identification of energy with time (*kāla*). However, even with these identifications, Abhinavagupta's theory of consciousness still remains a transcendental theory. To be able to accommodate modern science, and to be relevant to the needs of modern society, we need some fundamental revisions of Vedānta. In this context, it seems to me, Śrī Aurobindo's integral Advaita may be more promising, which is discussed in the sixth chapter of this work.

II

Etymological Considerations

Given that the nature and availability of a concept in a tradition cannot be separated from the words by which the concept is expressed in that tradition, I shall begin with a few remarks about the use of the Sanskrit terms that express the notion of consciousness. The Sanskrit word for consciousness is *cit*; in more modern languages, for example, in Hindi and Bengali, it is *caitanya*. Two other terms worth noting in this context are '*jñāna*' and '*vijñāna*'. In earlier philosophical literature, especially the Upaniṣads, both terms have been used synonymously with

consciousness (although in different senses in later systematic writings).[7] In this introduction, I shall not go into the nuances of the meanings of these terms as reflected in their textual usages, a task that I intend to undertake in the individual chapters of this work. Suffice it to say that in this book, I shall use *cit* for consciousness and *jñāna* for specific cognitions.

Vijñāna, as the etymology suggests, would then be a special kind of *jñāna*, although the Buddhists use this term, particularly a variant of it—*vijñapti*—for all cognitions. It is worth noting that some philosophers, especially the Naiyāyikas, have used the word '*buddhi*' as synonymous to both *cit* and *jñāna*, while others have regarded *buddhi* as a special faculty of comprehension. In any case, consciousness and knowledge are both distinguished from *manas* (generally translated as 'mind'), which has been construed as the *inner sense* (*antaḥkaraṇa*) in the Indian systems of philosophy. It is worth noting that neither Western philosophy nor Western psychology makes a clear distinction between 'mind', 'intellect', and 'consciousness'. They generally use 'mind' and 'consciousness' synonymously, and construe 'intellect' as an intellectual faculty, better yet, activity of the mind. Among Western philosophers, Kant's distinction between the inner sense, intellect, and consciousness roughly approximates the distinction between '*manas*', '*buddhi*', and '*cit*' found in the Indian context. Kant argues that whereas all mental representations belong to the inner sense, the faculty of intellect conceptualizes, and consciousness objectifies the raw materials of knowledge.

Given that a cognitive state is also a state of consciousness, it will be imperative that in my discussion, I carefully distinguish between questions of knowledge and questions of consciousness. The former, in a more specific sense of *jñāna*, belongs to the theory of knowledge or epistemology, and falls under the purview of *pramāṇaśāstra*. For the latter, that is, *cit* or consciousness, there seems to have been no specific branch of philosophy. In Indian philosophy, either *cit* is identical with the self or ātman, or else the ātman is reducible to a stream of consciousness. In any case, *cit* finds its place among the proper themes of metaphysics.

To offer a remark or two about the use of corresponding terms in Western languages—the English word 'consciousness' has no equivalent in Greek. As a matter of fact, it is widely held that the Greeks did not have a fully developed concept of consciousness and the Greek language does not have a suitable word for it. The origin of the word goes back

perhaps to the Roman 'conscience', meaning 'the inner voice'. One interesting feature of the word 'consciousness' is the occurrence of the suffix '-ness', which seems to suggest an abstract noun or the property 'of being conscious'. The Sanskrit word does not have that sense, unless one uses the word '*caitanya*'. The German '*Bewusstsein*' ends with the suffix '*sein*', which does not have the same meaning as the English suffix 'ness' (which in German would be '*heit*' or '*keit*'). *Sein* rather means 'being', thus *Bewusstsein* would seem to mean 'being conscious'. On the further implications of the contrast I shall not make any remark for the present.

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the word 'consciousness' has often been used among philosophers and psychologists in any of three different meanings. In the widest sense, it is used to stand for all mental states, cognitive, affective, and conative. In this sense, perceptions, thinking or thoughts, feelings such as pleasure and pain, emotions such as happiness, love, sadness, hopes and desires are all states of consciousness. In a narrower sense, which many philosophers have preferred, only cognitive states are states of consciousness. In this sense, one would regard pleasure and pain, hopes and desires as not states of consciousness, but at best as possible objects of one's cognition or knowledge and so objects of consciousness. In the third, perhaps, the most restricted sense, one regards consciousness as what should be called self-consciousness, that means not the primary cognitive states but one's awareness of these states. When we go through different theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy, we will notice how these three senses are being used in different systems.

III

Consciousness: Its Basic Marks

In discussions of the nature of consciousness in Indian or Western traditions, some important features are recognized as distinguishing consciousness from all other things. Two of these have especially been important: these are intentionality and self-luminosity. One might attempt a generalization—risky though it is—and argue that self-luminosity has been the central feature of consciousness in the Indian tradition, while intentionality has occupied that position in the Western tradition. I am

not trying to suggest here that the Indian tradition does not recognize intentionality or that the Western tradition ignores self-luminosity.

Self-luminosity implies that a state of consciousness, by its very existence, is aware of itself. Alternatively, one could say that if a subject S has a state of consciousness C, then S eo ipso is aware of having C, so that it is never the case that S has C without being aware of itself. By intentionality is meant the property, which every state of consciousness has, of referring to an object, being about something, or simply having an object. For those who regard consciousness to be intentional by definition, it is never the case that the subject S has a state of consciousness C, but C is not about something whatsoever. In other words, one is always conscious *of* something no matter what the ontological status of that object might be. It may be an external object, it may be an internal or mental object, or it may be an abstract entity like number, or it may be an illusory object like the snake that one sees under illusion.

There are many philosophical problems concerning both these features and these questions will be discussed in course of discussing the theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy. In particular, I shall discuss the question whether both these features can be combined as characterizing the consciousness, or whether they are mutually incompatible.

For the present, I wish to add one more preliminary remark before concluding this section. In the preceding paragraphs, I have talked about states of consciousness. This may lead one to wonder whether the locution 'states of consciousness' implies a distinction between consciousness and its states, analogously to the way one distinguishes between a body and its states. There are three possible answers to this question:

1. One may look upon consciousness as a substance (as a body may be taken to be), and the states of consciousness to be the states of this substance. Conceived in this way, consciousness may be implicitly taken to be the same as what one calls the 'soul' or the 'mind', that is, a spiritual substance.
2. Or, one may regard the states of consciousness not really to be the states *of* consciousness, but rather conscious states, which makes the analogy with the body misleading. Consciousness per se, in that case would not be a substance, which undergoes changes in the form of states, but rather a universal, which is instantiated in these changing states.

The abstract noun-forming suffix 'ness' may suggest this interpretation. But other linguistic usages would not be consistent with this reading. One, for example, speaks of 'my consciousness', which suggests that consciousness is not a universal, but a something which is differentiated as mine or yours. Universals are not differentiated in this fashion.

3. Or, one may regard consciousness simply as a blanket term, which applies to all states of consciousness without standing for either a substance or a universal. (This ambiguity in the meaning of the word 'consciousness' is reflected in various theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy.)

Anticipating the detailed expositions of the theories in the chapters to follow, I would at this point suggest that the first account is that of Vedānta and the third of Buddhism. The second comes close to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika account in some respects, while differing from it in others.

IV

Important Conceptual Distinctions

Although all Indian philosophers agree that consciousness reveals or manifests its object, they differ widely regarding its nature. It is not an exaggeration to say that the philosophers belonging to different Vedic and the non-Vedic *darśanas* have argued for centuries—and continue to argue—about the nature and function of consciousness. Materialists and naturalists of various kinds have attacked it and sought to expel it; and metaphysicians have sought to find a place for it in the scheme of things; psychologists have classified and described its various modes; idealist philosophers have found in it the clue to the nature of reality. A close and careful study of it in Indian thought cannot but help us, not only in understanding one of the pervasive themes in Indian philosophy, but also in evaluating the Western philosophers' thoughts about it. It may even be hoped that we may suggest ways of dealing with the new questions that are being asked about consciousness in scientific circles today.

Before undertaking an analysis of these divergent theories, however, let me pause briefly to review some fundamental distinctions that might help my readers come to grips with the nature and function of

consciousness in the Indian tradition. Wherever necessary, I shall place these distinctions in their proper historical context. I hope that these distinctions will not only help my readers correctly understand the basic issues that surround this important notion of consciousness, but also set the stage for the discussion to ensue in the following chapters.

The Empirical–Transcendental Distinction

Consciousness may be taken to be either empirical or transcendental. An empirical theory would identify consciousness with such states as 'consciousness of this pitcher' or 'consciousness of that jar'. Consciousness in this context always belongs to someone (e.g., Bina Gupta) and is *of* an object, (e.g., this pitcher). Empirical consciousness has the following features, no matter how widely accounts of it may differ otherwise: (1) it must be caused by worldly events and processes; (2) it must belong to an embodied self; and (3) it must be *of* something, that is to say, it must be directed towards objects in the world. To these, I should perhaps add another: (4) empirical consciousness must be a temporally changing process in time, and not a timeless entity.

Transcendental consciousness, on the other hand, must be independent of worldly causality. It is not an effect of causes, although the question remains whether or not it can be a cause of effects. Its intentional objects must not directly be those objects in the world. It is not a property of an embodied self, and it must not be a process—a series of constantly changing events—in time. In short, a transcendental account of consciousness regards consciousness as without locus (*āśraya*) and without object (*viṣaya*) and the condition of the possibility of manifestation of anything whatsoever.

The Objectivist–Subjectivist Distinction

An objectivist theory of consciousness is a theory which (a) regards consciousness as caused by objective conditions and (b) looks upon consciousness itself as an object, that is, as what is *paraprakāśa* (= as manifested by consciousness) like any other object (e.g., a jar). Thesis (a) is metaphysical, while thesis (b) is epistemological.

A subjectivist theory of consciousness does not look upon consciousness as an object, that is, as what is *paraprakāśa* like any other object (e.g., a jar). Rather, it takes consciousness to be *svaprakāśa*, that is, self-manifesting. On such a theory, consciousness may or may not be

caused. When it is not caused, it is wholly subjective and transcendental; when caused, it may be either objective, or partly objective and partly subjective.

Though I have outlined above the different and perhaps extreme models of thinking about consciousness, we must remember that in the context of Indian philosophy, the actual philosophical systems are much more complex and exemplify many intermediate shades and possibilities. It seems to me that of the schools of Indian philosophy, Cārvāka, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāmsā are prime examples of the empirical and objectivist view; Advaita Vedānta and Sāṃkhya-Yoga are subjectivist–transcendental; and Yogācāra Buddhism is partly objectivist and partly subjectivist. Between Yogācāra and Advaita Vedānta, there are several different schools of Vedānta. Space limitations set forth for this book do not allow me to do an in-depth investigation of these schools. Whenever possible, however, I will refer to some of these schools, especially Rāmānuja's qualified non-dualism and Abhinavagupta's Kāshmīr Śaivism. My readers must keep in mind that I am not trying to suggest here that there is clear-cut dichotomy among Indian theories of consciousness, that they can be divided neatly into crisp classifications. Nothing could be further from the truth. However, it is my hope that the above scheme would help my readers understand the Indian theories of consciousness and come to grips with the similarities and differences that exist among them.

Transcendental–Transcendent Distinction

The distinction between the meanings of the words 'transcendental' and 'transcendent' is important. In the Indian philosophical writings in the English language, the word 'transcendental' is not clearly separated from the word 'transcendent'. The distinction, famously drawn by Kant, amounts to this: transcendent are all possible entities or things, which are beyond the limits of possible experience (e.g., afterlife, God, and soul), whereas transcendental principles are those that are the conditions of the possibility of experience, such as the Kantian categories. In general, on the Indian account, for a transcendental theory of consciousness as herein described, consciousness is in a sense transcendent—for in its pure nature it goes beyond all sensuous experience—but it is also transcendental, in the sense that in the absence of consciousness there would be no knowledge, empirical or otherwise.

V

The Purpose and the Plan of the Book

I have prepared this book with two primary goals in mind: (1) to demonstrate the profound contribution of Indian thought to the theme of consciousness, and (2) to make Indian thought accessible to my readers, irrespective of whether they belong to the Indian or the Western tradition. This book will clearly demonstrate that the theme of consciousness has been central to the Indian tradition, especially the Vedāntic tradition, since the time of the Upaniṣads (roughly 1000 BCE). Heidegger, Husserl's successor and protégé, was fundamentally mistaken in claiming that the theme of consciousness belongs essentially to modern Western philosophy, beginning with Descartes and reaching a final culmination in Husserl. His view was based on the conception that the notion of consciousness—as Hegel categorically stated—implies a subject–object distinction, which did not characterize Indian thinking. This book will amply demonstrate that Heidegger was mistaken in his assessment. We shall see that the subject–object distinction provided the starting point for Indian thinking on consciousness. It recognized the possibility of consciousness to rise beyond subject–object distinction, but also showed how this possibility may be actualized. Accordingly, '*cit*', though usually translated as 'consciousness', encompasses within its fold not only subject–object distinction, but also, what, for a lack of better words, may be called 'trans-empirical', or 'supra-rational consciousness', that is, the consciousness that transcends subject–object distinction.

This book, in accordance with the aim of the series in which it is scheduled to appear, is more conceptual than historical. It surveys various theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy. I begin with the Upaniṣadic conception of consciousness, followed by the Nyāya, Yogācāra, Advaita, and selected contemporary developments of consciousness in the Indian context. Given that no philosopher or school of philosophy develops in isolation, I have discussed the important issues surrounding the notion of consciousness in the context of their interaction among different schools of Indian philosophy. Also, throughout the book, wherever necessary, I make some brief comparative remarks showing similarities and differences between the Indian and the Western conceptions of consciousness—primarily theories of Kant, Hegel, and

Husserl—and detail some of these points in the concluding essay of this book.

It is important to note that I discuss various theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy in the context of their respective conceptual structures and argumentative forms rather than in their historical development. A comprehensive knowledge of a school of philosophy requires both knowledge of its historical development, as well as of its conceptual structure; it is also important to know the main philosophers belonging to the school under consideration, as well as the arguments advanced by them in support of their theses. Abstracting from history seems to reduce a school to a system of concepts, supported by a number of arguments. A particular school or system certainly does not come into being based on such abstractions. However, once it is there, one can abstract such a structure and reconstruct its discursive foundations. History yields one kind of understanding, while the abstract structure yields another. In this work, I do not claim to provide a complete grasp of the philosophical schools that I have discussed, but rather present an aspect, which a mere historian of philosophy does not provide.

Indian philosophy presents not one single homogeneous theory of consciousness, but a whole array of theories. I did not wish my exposition to be a simple disconnected listing of different theories of consciousness, whose contents do not dictate any sequence. Keeping this in mind, I have characterized these theories in accordance with a guiding unitary thread, which consists of two binary oppositions: subjective–objective and empirical–transcendental. After explaining these binary oppositions, I have classified different theories of consciousness into four types, which arise when one combines these binary oppositions, in order to provide my readers with a synopsis of important themes that run throughout the different theories of consciousness. In so doing, these themes provide a context and perspective for several different theories contained in this book and at the same time voice the underlying purpose of this book.

My arrangement of the four types of theories is undoubtedly guided by my own preference as a philosopher. If I were a Naiyāyika at heart, I would have placed that objectivist theory at the end. But being an Advaitin in my own philosophical predilections and conscious choice, I have so arranged these diverse theories that the story culminates in a subjectivist–transcendental theory. No philosophical exposition can pretend to be neutral; only a historian may claim that neutrality. I am fully aware that in adding a chapter on recent transformations of the Advaita theory, I have seemingly brought in a perspective which is historical. I have done

so not to complete a historical account, but rather to show that the conceptual nature of the Advaitic theory of consciousness undergoes transformations in the hands of many contemporary thinkers, which makes the Advaitic theory of consciousness stronger and more responsive to modern philosophical challenges.

The concluding chapter of this work presents the contemporary challenges in the discourse of Western philosophy and shows that the Advaita Vedānta fares well when compared to Kant, Hegel, French deconstructionist Derrida, and the quantum physicist. This indeed is a powerful list. The claim that I have reviewed some Western conceptions and assessed the Vedānta and other Indian schools in their light, is certainly a large claim. However, I believe that within the short compass of this project, I have succeeded in pointing out directions which can be followed and lines of thought which can be developed further, both by me in the future and by my readers.

With this in mind, let us begin the story.

Notes

1. 'The Confessions', chapter xiv. Whitney J. Oaks (ed.), *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, New York, Random House, 1948, p. 191.

2. It is as though, the One, in the language of the Upaniṣads, said 'I want to be many' (*ahaṃ bahu syām*). The idea of one becoming many is one of the recurring themes of the Upaniṣads. For example, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (BU) portrays Prajāpati as 'undefined', 'unlimited', 'Who?', i.e., one who has no identity and has no name and conceives a desire to multiply himself, manifest himself, to become the many:

> In the beginning, there existed here only the ātman, having the form of a person (*puruṣa*). And that, having looked around, saw no other than the self. He first uttered the words: "That am I," and thereby became "He" by name. Therefore, even now, when (one is) addressed, he first says just "It is I" and then declares another name which he bears (Cf.BU, 1.4.1–4).

3. BU, 2.3.6.

4. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (MAU), 1.

5. Abhinavagupta, a Kāshmīrī Śaiva theologian, is considered to be one of the leading exponents of the non-dualistic Śaivism. It is not an exaggeration to say that he profoundly influenced the philosophies of Kāshmīr Śaivism.

6. Abhinavagupta's theory of consciousness, in many respects, is similar to Śaṃkara's theory of consciousness. Like Śaṃkara, Abhinavagupta regards

primary consciousness, one universal and undifferentiated, to be the metaphysical source, basis, and the foundation of all things. But unlike Śaṃkara, he does not regard the world and the finite selves to be the illusory appearances of the one consciousness. They are not products of *māyā* superimposed upon the latter. Rather, they are real modifications, which arise out of and return into, the one consciousness. And all this takes place by virtue of the inherent, free, and creative power (*śakti*) which lies in the very nature of consciousness. *Cit* is also *śakti*. Herein lies the most distinctive feature of Abhinavagupta's Kāshmīr Śaivism. That consciousness is not only, like light, of the nature of self-manifestation, but also force and power is one of its chief contributions to the philosophy of consciousness. Such a theory, no doubt taken up and developed by Śrī Aurobindo, has enormous metaphysical possibilities, especially in the philosophies of physics and biology.

7. See *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 5.2; *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, 3.3; and *Bhagavad Gīta*, 3.41, 6.8, 7.2, 9.1, and 18.42 (for various usages of *jñāna* and *vijñāna*) Also see Śaṃkara's and Rāmānuja's commentaries on these verse of the *Gītā*.

2

Consciousness
Its Beginnings in the Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads are early Hindu texts and are formally parts of the Vedas, the earliest and the most basic scriptures of Hinduism. In the Upaniṣads the fundamental Hindu beliefs, e.g., the foundation of the world, karma and rebirth, the true nature of the self, etc., were clearly articulated for the first time. The Upaniṣads are generally taken to signify the esoteric teachings imparted orally by the guru (spiritual teacher) to his disciples (*upa*, 'near'; *ni*, 'down'; *sad*, 'to sit'). In this oral tradition, the guru and the pupils engaged in discussions, which gave the discourse an intellectual form and eventually became incorporated as part of the strictly philosophical tradition.

The Upaniṣads still remain a major source of inspiration and authority for the Hindus. The principal Upaniṣads were composed sometime between 600 and 300 BCE. It is generally believed that there are 200 Upaniṣads; the traditional number, however is 108. These texts were not compiled in the same period. They were composed by different individuals, living at different times and in different parts of North India. Additionally, the individuals who put the Upaniṣads into their final written form incorporated their own teachings in the Upaniṣads. In some cases, different chapters of the same Upaniṣads represent the ideas of different thinkers. Thus, the Upaniṣads are not systematic philosophical treatises by any means. If one tries to look for an integrated system of philosophy in the Upaniṣads, one will be disappointed. There is no coherent system; there is no systematic and logical development of ideas. They contain inherent ambiguities, inconsistencies, and even seeming contradictions. The Upaniṣads, especially the longer ones, are in the form of dialogues and try to convey truths using symbols, narratives, metaphors, and concrete images. Their highly symbolic language and elliptical style further compounds the problem. Thus, it is not easy to summarize the teachings of the Upaniṣads. However, one can discern a broad theme of

the coherence and final unity of all things that has been reiterated in different ways.

The discussions of 'consciousness' in the Upaniṣads arise in the context of explaining the real nature of the ātman or the self. The Sanskrit term for consciousness is '*cit*'. In the Western philosophico-religious traditions, the term 'self' generally connotes a subject, the referent of 'I'. Ātman, however, though usually translated as 'self', does not refer to the 'I', the empirical self. In the Upaniṣads, both *cit* and ātman refer to pure consciousness, a kind of trans-empirical consciousness, which not only is different from the empirical consciousness, but also forms the basis of the latter. Following the literal translation of the term '*cit*' as '*consciousness*', in this chapter, I shall use 'self', 'consciousness', 'pure consciousness', 'real self', and 'pure self' interchangeably to connote ātman or *cit*, to be distinguished from the empirical self (*jīva*), the I-consciousness.

I

To express their vision of the unity of things, most Upaniṣads identify a single fundamental principle which underlies everything. The most typical designation for this is the 'brahman'. This fundamental principle is also the core of each individual, and this core has been designated as the 'ātman', the 'self', the life force independent of physical body. In the language of the Upaniṣads, the brahman, the first principle, is discovered within the ātman, or conversely, the secret of the ātman, the foundational reality of the individual self, lies in the first principle, the root of all existence. In other words, the ātman and the brahman are one. This oneness between the ātman and the brahman expresses the quintessence of the Upaniṣadic teachings. The Upaniṣads variously repeat this teaching: *tat tvam asi*, 'that thou art';[1] '*brahman* is intelligence';[2] *aham brahmāsmi*, 'I am *brahma*';[3] and *ayam ātmā brahman*, 'this ātman is *brahman*'.[4] These four, generally known as the great sayings (*mahāvākyas*), reiterate the same point in different ways: the outer and the inner are one. They signify brahman = ātman, meaning thereby that 'I', 'you', 'the world', indeed, everything is brahman = ātman.

The Upaniṣadic seers sought not simply to understand this oneness between the ātman and the brahman, but also to know it, to experience it. Given that the brahman defies all characterizations and descriptions, it seemed entirely appropriate to the seers to begin with the ātman, the

foundational reality of the empirical individual. Thus, the nature of the ātman became the focus of their investigations. Through an analysis of the nature of the self, an individual realizes that the brahman and the ātman, the objective and the subjective, are one. The questions arose: What is ātman or consciousness? How does the ātman relate to the psychophysical organism, or what we call 'I'? Who am I? How does one realize the oneness between the ātman and the brahman?

The Upaniṣads make many attempts to specify the nature of ātman. They use various concepts to characterize the ātman or consciousness, for example, 'seer' (*draṣṭā or vijñātā*),[5] 'self-light' or 'self-shining' (*ātmajyoti*),[6] inner controller' (*antaryāmī*),[7] or 'self-luminous' (*svayaṃjyoti*).[8] In many Upaniṣads, the attempts to specify the nature of ātman have involved distinctions between different stages of experience—more appropriately, of consciousness. I am referring here to the distinctions between waking, dreaming, deep sleep consciousness, and *turīya*. It is one of the common methods adopted in the Upaniṣads for arriving at the knowledge of the self as consciousness.

Given that no single Upaniṣads provides a systematic and comprehensive account of the nature of the ātman, one must discuss materials from different Upaniṣads and piece them together to get a complete coherent picture. To this end, in this section, I shall primarily discuss materials from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (BU), the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (CU), and the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (MAU). The dialogues and accounts selected provide an illuminating discussion of the different states of consciousness in the context of discussing the nature of ātman.

The most succinct, systematic, and formal discussion of the states of consciousness occurs in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. This Upaniṣad contains the first articulation of going beyond the triad format, that is, the three Vedas, three words, *aum*, and so on. It adds a fourth state to the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. However, the two earliest and significant precursors to the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*'s analysis of the states of consciousness are found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣads*. Therefore, I shall begin my discussion with the account found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads*, and conclude this section with an analysis of the states of consciousness in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*.

Discussions about the states of consciousness occur twice in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The first one occurs in the form of a dialogue between Ajātaśatru and Gārgya. Keeping in mind that a person

regains consciousness upon awakening from deep sleep, Ajātaśatru asks Gārgya: 'Where does a person (*puruṣa*)—who possesses consciousness (*vijñānamaya*)—go during sleep and from where does he come back?'[9]

Gārgya could not answer this question. Ajātaśatru then takes Gārgya to a person who is asleep and points out that during sleep when the senses are restrained, the empirical person rests in the space within the heart. In dream, the mind and the senses are not restrained and a person moves as he pleases, he becomes a king or a brahmin as it were. In deep sleep, however, a person knows nothing; he moves through the 72,000 channels called '*hitā*' and rests in the pericardium. In this state, one rests like a youth or a king or a brahmin who has reached the maximum (*atighnī*) of bliss.[10]

In another well-known dialogue, however, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the sage Yājñavalkya[11] describes the self as its own light. In this dialogue between Yājñavalkya and King Janaka, the king desires to know the source of illumination that makes it possible for human beings to function in this world. Yājñavalkya initially informs the king that it is the light of the sun. This answer, however, does not satisfy the king. He further asks: 'When the sun has set what light does a person have?' Yājñavalkya informs him that it is the light of the moon. This reply does not satisfy the king either. He queries further: 'With the setting of the sun and the moon, what light does a person have?' Yājñavalkya then replies: 'It is the light of the fire.' The king persists in questioning and asks what happens when the sun, and the moon, and the fire are out. Yājñavalkya informs him that it is the *vāc* or the word that guides a person. The king finally asks: 'What is the source of light when the *vāc* is also at rest?' Yājñavalkya replies:

> The self is indeed his light; with the self as light, he sits, runs around, does his work and returns.[12]

The self is its own light; it is self-effulgent, it is self-luminous.

Yājñavalkya then goes on to describe different states of self or consciousness. In the waking state, a person moves and functions on account of external physical light. In dreams, however, he goes beyond the waking world and the forms of death.[13] An individual passes from dream consciousness to waking consciousness and then returns to dream consciousness very much like a fish that swims from one bank of the river to another.[14] In both dreaming and waking states, duality is present. In deep sleep, however, consciousness passes into a state in which there are no dreams, no desires, and no pleasure, just like a hawk

or a falcon having flown around in the sky becomes exhausted, folds its wings and goes to his nest to rest. The self in this state is free from pain, does not lack anything, does not know anything; there are no desires, no dreams.[15] Yājñavalkya explains this experience with the help of an analogy: just as a man, when embraced by his beloved wife, does not know anything within or without, even so this empirical self, when embraced by conscious self, does not know anything within or without. In this state, there is no desire, because the self is his desire so to speak, because everything other than the self is forgotten.[16] There is a perfect quietude (*samprasanna*), there is nothing wanting or lacking; it is bliss. It is said:

> While one does not see anything there, one sees everything there. Seeing, one sees not; for there cannot be any absence of the sight of the seer, owing to the imperishability (of the seer); there is not that second entity differentiated from it which it can see.[17]

In this state, though the self does not see with the eyes, it is still the seer. The character of seeing is intrinsic to the self; the self can never lose this characteristic just as fire cannot lose the characteristic of burning. The self sees by its own light, it is the ultimate seer; there is no other for the self to see.

It is worth noting here that whereas Ajātaśatru identifies the self with the '*atighnī*' or bliss, Yājñavalkya argues that the true self, though not an object of thought, is experienced in the state of deep sleep, because in this state consciousness alone is present without any object.[18] The self by nature is free, pure, and eternal. It remains unaffected by pleasure and pain. It is perfect serenity and bliss.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, one of the attempts to specify the nature of ātman occurs in the context of the famous *mahāvākya* '*tat tvam asi*'. It is not an exaggeration to say that this saying embodies the Upaniṣadic doctrine of unity and coherence of all things. The Advaitins attach great significance to this statement because, in their opinion, this saying affirms a common locus, namely, consciousness, to the empirical person and the brahman. In other words, it clearly and undoubtedly expresses the oneness of the ātman and the brahman. I shall begin with an analysis of the context in which the text 'that thou art' occurs.[19]

The text occurs in the course of a dialogue between father, Āruṇi Uddālaka, and his son, Śvetaketu. Uddālaka sent his son Śvetaketu to a teacher to learn about the Vedas. Śvetaketu left home at the age of twelve, studied with the teacher for twelve years, and returned home at the age of twenty-four, very proud of his learning and with a great opinion of

himself. His father, noticing his son's arrogance, asked him: 'Do you understand the implications of that teaching by which the unheard becomes heard, the unperceived becomes perceived, the unknown becomes known?' Śvetaketu confessed his ignorance and requested instruction on the subject. Uddālaka explained as follows:

> My dear, just as by knowing one lump of clay, all things made of clay are known, the modification being only in name and arising from speech, while in truth all is just clay; just as by knowing one nugget of gold, all things made of gold are known, the modification being only in name and arising from speech, while in truth all is just gold; precisely so is that knowledge, by knowing which we know all.[20]

The point that the father was trying to make is as follows: to understand clay or gold entails an understanding of all things that are made of clay or gold, because the qualities of the modification in diverse forms will reflect the quality of the stuff of which they are made. Similarly, the father asked whether Śvetaketu knew about the reality of which all things were made and through which they were known. Śvetaketu informed his father that his teachers were presumably ignorant of this teaching and asked him to explain this teaching further. Uddālaka continued:

> In the beginning there was being alone, one only without a second .... He, the One, thought to himself: 'Let me be many; let me grow forth.' Thus, he out of himself projected the universe. And having projected this universe out of himself, he entered into every being. That 'being' alone is the essence of all beings. All things have 'being' as their abode, 'being' as their support.[21]

In other words, in the beginning, there was only being; the phenomenal world of names and forms was not there. This being, compelled by an inner necessity to become many, thought and by his thought arose heat, which can be felt, and heat gave rise to water (which can be felt and seen), and water gave rise to food (which can be felt, seen, and tasted), the most material of the three elements. These three elements form the foundation of the universe.[22]

After establishing the fundamental evolution of the world from this being, Uddālaka proceeds to show that human beings are the products of the mixture of these three elements in different proportions. For example, in the body, food assumes the form of mind, flesh, and excrement; water of breath (*prāṇa*), blood, and urine; heat of speech, marrow, and bone. Similarly, the process of dying also reflects the

devolvement of these three elements. Upon death, people first lose consciousness, though they still breathe. This constitutes reabsorption of food by water; it is important to remember in this context that food gives rise to mind and bodily consciousness; breath, on the other hand, is an evolute of water. When water is reabsorbed in the heat, the breathing stops, because water corresponds to breath. Even in the absence of breath, the body remains warm, on account of the presence of heat in it. Finally, when the heat dissipates into being, death is complete. In this passage, being is said to be the source of the empirical body, mind, and the entire phenomenal universe.

After establishing the evolution of everything out of and involution of everything into, one being, at Śvetaketu's insistence for further instruction, Uddālaka asks Śvetaketu to bring a fruit from the *nyagrodha* tree and instructs him to cut it open. Śvetaketu does so and finds seeds in the fruit; however, he does not find anything in the seeds. The father, Uddālaka, explains to the son that the entire tree comes from the invisible essence that exists within the seeds. 'Believe me, my child, that which is the subtle essence, this whole world has that for its self. That is the true self. That thou art, Śvetaketu.'[23] This being, the source of everything, is the self of Śvetaketu, which is not different from ātman or consciousness. This consciousness thus not only underlies the empirical consciousness; it is also the consciousness that underlies the world. Most of the Upaniṣads echo the same point in different ways: that which lies beyond the plurality of names and forms, that is, the self or consciousness, is not accessible through empirical modes of knowing. Moreover, it serves as the foundation of all experiences; however, it remains uncontaminated by any experiences whatsoever.

In another dialogue in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, we find that both Indra (representing gods) and Virocana (representing demons) approach Prajāpati for the knowledge of the immortal self.[24] They are eager to learn about the self, which is free from sin, old age, death, hunger, thirst, etc. Prajāpati asks Indra to wear his best clothes and jewellery and look into a pool of water, which reflects his adorned image. Prajāpati informs them that the true self is nothing but the self seen in a reflection: that the self is the same as the body. Virocana leaves with the mistaken notion that the ātman is the same as the body and so informs the demons. Indra, however, was overwhelmed with doubts; he finds Prajāpati's explanation unsatisfactory. Indra says that he does not see any good in this explanation because this implies that this self in the shadow is adorned when the body is adorned, dressed when the body is dressed, cleaned when the

body is cleaned. So the self will also be blind if the body is blind, lame if the body is lame, crippled if the body is crippled, and will perish when the body perishes.[25] So Prajāpati next tells Indra that the self seen in dream is the ātman, that is the true self, because in the dream state the self can roam independent of the body. Indra is not satisfied with this answer either. He again approaches Prajāpati for further explanation. Prajāpati informs Indra that the self experienced in deep sleep is the ātman: 'When a person is asleep with senses withdrawn, [when one] is serene, and sees no dream—that is the self. This is immortal, this is the brahman.'[26] Indra left; however, he was not yet satisfied; so he returns and tells Prajāpati that in deep sleep, the self does not know itself nor is it conscious of any objects. This explanation suggests to Indra that when everything is withdrawn, even the subject ceases to be; it is destroyed. This time Indra studies with Prajāpati for five years. Finally, Prajāpati reveals to Indra the true nature of the self—'the body is the support of the deathless and the bodiless self. Embodied self is affected by pleasures and pains; however, pleasures and pains do not touch the bodiless self.'[27] In embodied existence, the self is vulnerable to likes and dislikes; the bodiless self, on the other hand, is untouched by these. The bodiless self is unchangeable essence of the empirical self, the I-consciousness; it is immortal. It is the highest light (*parama jyotiḥ*), the light of lights.

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* states that the self is four-footed, that is, there are four states of consciousness. At the outset, this Upaniṣad identifies *aum* with 'all that there is'; it refers to what was, what is, and what will be. Though beyond time, it forms the unmanifest basis of the manifest universe. The *aum* is the most effectual sound symbol of the brahman. The three letters *a*, *u*, and *m* of the word *aum* correspond to the three forms in which the self appears respectively, in the states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless deep sleep.

The three states of consciousness are known as: *viśva*, *taijasa*, and *prājña*:

> The universal self (*vaiśvānara*), with the waking state (*jāgaritāsthāna*) as its manifestation, with consciousness directed outward, of seven limbs and nineteen mouths, is the enjoyer of gross things, is the first quarter.
>
> The second quarter is the *taijasa* or the luminous, with the dream state as its manifestation, with consciousness directed inward, with seven limbs and nineteen mouths, it is the enjoyer of consciousness not related to objects.
>
> Where the sleeper desires no desires, sees no dream, that is deep sleep (*suṣupti*). The third quarter has deep sleep for its manifestation;

it has become one, is of the nature of enlightenment, full of bliss, an enjoyer of bliss, with consciousness as its face.[28]

Viśva is the waking consciousness in which the self cognizes external objects. It has seven limbs[29] and nineteen mouths.[30] Given that it is only in this state the self is conscious of external objects, its experiences are sensuous. The waking consciousness is the first foot (*pāda*) of the self. It is the outermost appearance of the self. *Taijasa*, the dreaming consciousness, is the second state in which the self enjoys impressions imprinted upon the mind during the waking experience. In this state, the self is 'internally conscious'; it experiences subtle objects created out of the mental impressions of the waking consciousness. This state is sublated on waking up. The third state, *prājña*, is a state of dreamless sleep in which the mind and the senses are quiescent and there is a cessation of normal consciousness; the subject–object distinction no longer exists, nor does distinction among objects. There are no desires, no dreams, neither pleasures nor pain. It is an entirely undifferentiated state. This self in this state is still capable of knowing, but does not know anything because there is no object to know. Therefore, it is called *prājña*: 'It is not a state of consciousness in the ordinary sense; but it is not a state of blank or absolute consciousness either, for some sort of awareness is associated with it. It is not, however, "the objectless knowing subject" that endures in it ...; for along with the object, the subject as such also disappears then. It is rather a state of non-reflective awareness, if we may so term it.'[31]

Apart from the three states of consciousness discussed above, the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* also recognizes a fourth state, the *turīya* (the transcendent), the undifferentiated state of pure consciousness which is beyond the changing and conditioned phenomenal modes of existence. Consciousness in itself is independent, inactive, eternal, undifferentiated, light without any content, that exists as pure '*jña*'. The ātman or consciousness, though eternal, also persists in empirical-practical experiences. In the final analysis, the brahman, the ātman, and the individual self are one.

II

The above discussion about the self or consciousness reveals that the Upaniṣadic quest for self was not simply an intellectual analysis; the goal was to provide an understanding of the meaning and the significance

of the world, as well as a satisfactory explanation of the identification of the ātman, the brahman, and the empirical self or the individual consciousness.

We also notice that the Upaniṣadic seers use divergent paradigms and traverse their journey in quest of self from different, and at times, opposite directions. In his quest, Uddālaka begins with the paradigm of evolution and involution, that is, he begins by identifying the being (*sat*) as the principle from which the world evolves and into which it devolves. In contrast, Prajāpati, Yājñavalkya, and the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* employ a kind of deeper hierarchical approach using different levels of experience in which one observes different states of consciousness. They move from gross to subtle and from subtle to still subtle and progressively unfold the meaning of the self using different levels of experience and finally arrive at the most basic, the most fundamental, the deepest level. These Upaniṣads employ a psychological, or better yet, a subjective approach, given that they use different stages of consciousness to unfold progressively the real nature of the self as consciousness. Uddālaka, on the other hand, employs a physical or objective approach insofar as he begins with an analysis of the outer world, and arrives at the conclusion that the same consciousness underlies both the objective and the subjective; in the final analysis they are one.

We also see that the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* provide different accounts of the deep-sleep state. In recalling the Indra and Prajāpati dialogue discussed above, we find that when Prajāpati informs Indra that the ātman is experienced in deep sleep, Indra goes away with a tranquil heart; however, before arriving at the gods, he sees the danger of identifying the self with the deep sleep because in this state the embodied self does not know himself as 'I am he' nor does it know other beings. So Indra reflects that in the deep-sleep state the self has 'become one who has gone to destruction (*vināśam eva apita*). I see nothing useful in it'.[32] Thus, Indra takes the lack of subject–object duality in deep sleep to signify the destruction of the subject itself. Indra returns to Prajāpati after five more years and Prajāpati reveals to him the true nature of the self. The dialogues discussed above from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, on the other hand, explain the deep-sleep state differently. Whereas, in the first dialogue, Ajātaśatru states that the self in the state of deep sleep reaches the maximum (*atighnī*) of bliss, Yajñavalkya, in the second dialogue, points out that the self in this state is the ultimate seer.

Notwithstanding the divergent approaches and at times opposite starting points, these Upaniṣads unanimously highlight the following characterizations of ātman or consciousness:

1. Consciousness, although the basis of the all knowing, is different from the object known. It is implied in every act of knowing. It is the ultimate subject; it can never become an object of knowledge. It is one, immutable, indivisible reality.
2. It is different from the I-consciousness or the empirical individual (*jīva*), who cognizes and enjoys. In other words, it is different from the empirical individual who is caught up in the triple states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep.
3. Consciousness, although it continues in the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, is not identical with any of them.
4. It shines in its own light; it is self-luminous.

Let us expound on these points further.

Although the Upaniṣads use different concepts—'seer', 'inner controller', 'self-light', 'self-shining', 'self-luminous',—to characterize the ātman or consciousness, they echo the same point in different ways: that which lies beyond the plurality of names and forms, that is, the self, is not accessible through empirical modes of knowing. While consciousness is eternal and is non-different from the brahman, it also persists in empirical–practical experiences. Accordingly, it is more fundamental than the merely empirical. It is completely independent, exists in its own right, and is the basis of our understanding of 'I'. It is eternal, non-dual, and remains unchanged. It is the basic presupposition of all knowing:

> That this self entered here into all these bodies up to the fingernail tips, just as a razor would be hidden in its case, or as fire, which sustains the universe, lies in its source. [People] do not realize it, for [as seen] it is incomplete (when viewed piecemeal) .... Of all these, the self alone is to be known, because one knows all through it, just as one can trace (a missing animal) through its footprints.[33]

This passage declares in no uncertain terms that by knowing the self one acquires complete knowledge of all its names and forms, because the unmanifest differentiates itself into names and forms. This very self enters into all bodies up to the nail ends, like a razor enters into the razor case, or fire enters into the wood; while breathing it is known as

the life energy (*prāṇa*); while speaking as the speech; while seeing as the eye; while hearing as the ear; and while thinking as the mind. These are the various names of the self corresponding to its actions. Knowing the self amounts to knowing all its names; the self is the unitary basis of all knowing.

Though the self or consciousness is the basis of all knowing, it cannot be known by any empirical means of knowledge; it is different from objects known. The self cannot be known like another physical object, say, a table. It is the eternal sight or the seer.

> [You] cannot see the seer of seeing, [you cannot] hear the hearer of hearing, [you cannot] think the thinker of thinking, [you cannot] know the knower of knowing.[34]

The self forms the basis of both the subjective and the objective poles of experience. Functions of the body—seeing, hearing, knowing, etc.—occur not in the self but in the outside world. Rather, the self is the knower of all; it is the eternal witness; the ultimate subject that can never be made an object of knowledge. That is why it can only be described as '*neti, neti*' ('not this, not this').[35] No description of it is possible except the denial of all empirical attributes.

This very same self is said to be the self of the world. It lies behind everything, it controls everything from within; it is the inner controller:

> [It is] the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker, the unknown knower. There is no seer other than him, no hearer other than him, no thinker other than him, no knower other than him. He is your self, the inner controller, the immortal. Other than him is the sufferer.[36]

The 'sun and the moon', 'heaven and earth', the flow of rivers, etc., operate at his command. The subject–object duality functions in the phenomenal world of names and forms. The experientially variable can only be isolated against an invariable background. It is self-contradictory to say that there are things but no consciousness. The consciousness or the self is a necessary condition for all knowing, that is, all actions, thoughts, and cognitions presuppose consciousness. It is a witness to everything that happens. As witness, the self stands behind everything that is known (known discursively in wakeful life, known dreamingly in dreams, and known as unknown in deep sleep).[37]

The lesson one learns from the distinction between the waking, dreaming, and dreamless states is that consciousness is not coextensive either with the waking awareness of things in the world or with feelings

and thoughts within; the self or consciousness is continuous in all three states. It passes from the dream state to waking life and from waking life back to the dream state very much like a fish that swims from one bank of the river to another. When a person goes to sleep, he takes with him the impressions received during the waking state, pulls them apart, reconstructs them, and dreams by his own nature and own light. The sun illuminates objects in waking life. Since the sun does not shine inside us, but yet objects are revealed to the dreaming self, there must be another source of illumination. It is said:

> When he goes to sleep, he takes with him the material of this all-embracing world, himself pulls it apart, himself builds it up; dreams by his own nature and own light; then this person becomes self-illuminating.[38]

In other words, in the waking state a person is aware of the subject–object duality. While dreaming, since one is only aware of dream objects, the waking individual himself becomes both the subject and the object, so to speak. The impressions of the waking state furnish the materials for the dream state. In the dream state, the body is set aside for all practical purposes. When, in dreams, the mind detaches itself from external objects, the self manifests those impressions. The power of manifestation belongs to the self, which serves as the light in all three states. The dream world, being its own creation, is lighted by the eternal vision of the self. In other words, the self itself becomes the light, and, accordingly, must shine by its own light.

The consciousness, though continuous, is not identical with any of the three states. Both dreaming and waking states are characterized by duality. In deep sleep, however, the self, like a hawk or a falcon, who having flown around in the sky becomes exhausted, folds its wings and goes to his nest to rest, passes into a dreamless state in which it has no desire, no pleasure, and no dreams. In this state, there is no desire because all objects of desire have been realized and only the self remains as devoid of all pains and afflictions.[39] The self in the deep-sleep state does not know anything for there is no object to know,[40] yet because there cannot be any absence of seeing on the part of the knower who is imperishable, it is said to be the ultimate seer. In fact, the sight and the seer are one.

Yājñavalkya in his discussion with King Janaka hammers the point that though the self does not perceive any object in deep sleep, it still sees in that state; however, it does not see in the usual manner, that is, through the eyes. Consciousness is imperishable; there is no cessation

of the seeing of the seer. In the state of deep sleep, there is nothing else but pure consciousness. As fire never loses its property of burning or the sun of shining, so the seer, the self, never loses its power of seeing. Yājñavalkya here makes a distinction between two kinds of sight: the phenomenal and the eternal. The former takes place with the eyes; such a seeing is an accidental attribute of the self which has a beginning as well as an end. Particular acts of sensing involve duality and take place under particular spatio-temporal conditions.[41] However, the sight which the self possesses by its very nature, like the burning of fire or the shining of the sun, is eternal. Eternal seeing is an essential attribute of the self. When it is associated with phenomenal sight, its limiting adjunct, it is described as the seer and is differentiated into the seer and the sight. It is metaphorically described at times as seeing and at other times as not seeing, although it is the same forever. In reality, the seer and the sight are identical. The self or consciousness exists within all; it is immutable.

The phenomenon of deep sleep is especially significant, since in it all mental activities are suspended and the consciousness of individuality is absent. The question arises: Is there awareness in deep sleep? Clearly, many Indian philosophers have maintained that there is no awareness in this state. But it is argued against this position that if there were no awareness in the state of deep sleep, one could not, upon waking, remember 'I slept well'. Memory is a reproduction of past experiences; it amounts to the present recalling of a conscious experience of the past. So if there is awareness in the state of deep sleep, of what is it aware? For an answer, we again look closely at the statement 'I slept well'. Clearly the object of awareness is the feeling of well-being, which is not attached to a specific objective source (as one also reports upon waking from deep sleep 'I was not aware of myself or of anything'). This report suggests that the object of awareness was the simple non-knowing, or ignorance, itself. So one could say that in the state of deep sleep, there is awareness of ignorance in general, as well as of bliss or well-being (which cannot be the same as pleasure), which characterizes consciousness in its original nature. It points to the fact that knowledge of duality is only a conditional and temporary feature of finite lives. From deep sleep, one awakes and recalls that one slept happily and remembered nothing. In the deep-sleep state, distinctions are not overcome. The self, being hidden by a kind of undifferentiated darkness, absorbs duality and multiplicity. Deep sleep demonstrates that something permanent, unchanging, and foundational to all experiences must be present even when the consciousness of external objects is not present. This state is different from *turīya*, the fourth state.

Of the so-called fourth state, we are not told much in the Upaniṣads. We have already seen that both the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* do not recognize the fourth state. Nonetheless, they variously describe the self in deep sleep as the ultimate seer, light of lights, the truth of truths, maximum of bliss, and so on. These concepts foreshadow the *turīya* of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad.* From all accounts we have, it would seem that *turīya* designates a state of release, which is the underlying substratum of the triple states of waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep. In this state, the self is comprehended as 'it is', as consciousness. Though it is not intentional and is not characterized by the subject–object duality, it is not unconsciousness.[42] *Turīya* is described as a state of consciousness that transcends the subject–object distinction, while the first three states exemplify this distinction in their progressively vanishing forms. One could argue that in these experiences, consciousness asserts its freedom from the world of objects in different states. If we follow this line of thinking, rather than the predominantly Western idea that consciousness is intentionally directed towards the world, we could say that in some *darśanas* of the Indian tradition, for example, Vedānta and Sāṃkhya-Yoga, consciousness is progressively distancing itself from the object—and in that sense consciousness embodies in different forms the very idea of freedom.[43] Commenting on MAU, Śaṃkara states that *turīya* is nothing but pure consciousness.[44] Whereas *prājña* is conditioned by cause and effect, *turīya* is not conditioned by either. *Prājña* is deep sleep; it is the causal state that gives rise to the cognitions of variety and multiplicity. *Turīya* consciousness, like the sun, shines as ever luminous;[45] it is opposed to darkness that characterizes *prājña.* It is at once *sarvadṛk*, the seer of everything that there is, and the witness of everything that exists. There is nothing besides *turīya.* It exists in all beings during the waking and the dreaming states, and is called the seer of everything. Being of the nature of pure consciousness, the self shines forth in its own light revealing eternally and continuously.

III

In the history of the concept of consciousness, in both the East and West, we find a predominance of the metaphor of light. In Sanskrit literature, when talking about the light of consciousness, the metaphor of light is very frequently used. This is no less true of Western thinking in these

matters. It seems that in the Western philosophical tradition, Plato might have been the first to use this metaphor of light to characterize the idea of the good. Just as the sun gives visibility to the objects in the physical world, the idea of the good gives intelligibility to the objects of thought.[46] Christian theologies regard God as the source of human reason so that the light of reason is derived from the original light. For Aquinas, for example, the intellect of the creature is also called the intellectual/intelligible light derived from the primordial light.[47] However, the idea seems to be that just as light has a source, similarly human consciousness derives from some source, say, for example, God, or, in the case of Advaita Vedānta, ātman-brahman.

It is perhaps since Descartes that the idea of consciousness in Western philosophy became prominent and the metaphor of light came to be applied to consciousness. In recent times, many Western philosophers have drawn attention to the way the metaphor of light has influenced the understanding of the nature of consciousness and mind in Western philosophy. For example, Gilbert Ryle characterizes the concept of consciousness as 'a piece of para-optics'.[48]

The point of the metaphor of light is simple. Things that are in the dark come to be illuminated and so seen when light is made to focus on them. This picture has weighed heavily on thinking about consciousness. In Indian thought, darkness is the metaphor used for not knowing, while light is the metaphor for consciousness. A pervasive feature of discourse about *cit* or consciousness in the Upaniṣad is the use of the metaphor of light. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* dialogue discussed earlier between sage Yājñavalkya and King Janaka begins with the following question by King Janaka: 'Of what light is this *puruṣa*?' In other words, the king seeks to know the source of illumination that makes it possible for human beings to function in this world. In the waking state, a person moves and functions on account of external physical light. Thus, the obvious question: what serves as a light for a person in dreams and in deep sleep? Some sort of illumination must make it possible for us to see dream objects. From deep sleep, one awakes and recalls that one slept happily and knew nothing. This attests to the existence of some sort of light in the deep sleep as well as in the dream states of consciousness. Therefore, Janaka asks about the light which serves a person when he is asleep.

It is important to remember in this context that the sought-after 'light' is more basic than the physical light which makes the perception of physical objects possible. Yājñavalkya answers that the self is the light that serves a person in all the states: waking, dreaming, and dreamless

sleep. Light in this context does not signify simply consciousness and its conditions in an abstract sense, but also that which helps one to sit, walk about, work, and return. The power of manifestation belongs to the self as consciousness, which serves as the light in all three states. The dream world, being its own creation, is lighted by the self or consciousness. Consciousness is the light, and accordingly, shines by its own light. It is self-effulgent and eternal; it is 'self-luminous' (*svayaṃjyoti*).[49]

In Sanskrit literature, when talking about the light of consciousness, the authors use the analogy of a lamp. This analogy should not to be taken literally because both the lamp and its flame are material objects, which are strictly speaking objects of consciousness. So when the Vedāntins use the metaphor of light, they do not mean the physical light, the flame, the fire, and they certainly do not mean the lamp; what they mean is the lustre (*prabhā*), the capacity to manifest independently of an impulse which makes possible all seeing or knowing. No physical light satisfies this requirement of independence. A flashlight can show a thing only to a conscious being; consciousness, however, shows things without presupposing any other thing. A lamp does not show a thing to itself, only to a consciousness. If consciousness is light, it must be such a light as shows a thing only to itself. This gives rise to a fresh difficulty. Consciousness by itself, it may be argued, cannot show anything. If there is complete darkness, consciousness cannot penetrate it, only physical light can. Consciousness also needs the cognitive apparatus of the body, sense organs, for example, properly functioning eye, in order to make something visible. So how could consciousness then be independent?

To such a question, Advaita Vedānta provides the following answer: things in the world are first apprehended by the appropriate sense organs. But this sensory apprehension is not yet knowledge of those objects unless and until consciousness falls on those sensory modifications and manifests them. Without consciousness, there would be no knowledge; yet consciousness by itself cannot know external objects. Just as the light of the sun must be specifically focused through some channel or other to make a thing visible, similarly the undifferentiated consciousness must be focused on an object through the medium of a sensory modality in order to manifest it. In the case of internal objects, however, consciousness directly manifests them.

Given that the sense organs and all the other cognitive instruments, like a lamp, or fire, are also objects manifested by consciousness, it makes sense to say that consciousness manifests all things. Just as without the

sunlight, the universe would be shrouded in darkness, similarly without consciousness nothing would be known or manifested.

In this context, it is necessary to underscore one important point: consciousness not only manifests all things; it also manifests itself. The Vedāntins often reiterate that there is no need to bring another lamp to show a burning lamp. Just as the light shows itself without the mediation of any other light, similarly consciousness manifests all objects without any mediation. So far, the metaphor of light is applicable to consciousness. However, when stretched further, we realize that the metaphor is not entirely applicable. It is indeed true that the light shows itself without requiring another light to manifest it. However, the light shows itself, not to itself, but to another sentient being. What can we say of consciousness in this regard? Consciousness, we agree, shows itself, but to whom? Here there are many possibilities, and they are all represented in Indian thought. That it shows itself to itself is the thesis of Advaita Vedānta. That it shows itself, not to itself but to the self to whom it belongs, that is, to its locus (*svāśrayām prati prakāśamānatvaṃ*) is the thesis of the school of Rāmānuja.

In sum, the metaphor of light has been a pervasive feature of philosophical thinking about consciousness. It has many modern critics. I mentioned the name of Gilbert Ryle earlier. Heidegger is another critic. I shall discuss some of these criticisms in later chapters of this book.

IV

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Upaniṣads contain the origin and growth and the early crystallization of a variety of ideas associated with the themes of consciousness. Notwithstanding the metaphysical and epistemological ideas discussed above, the Upaniṣads suggest many empirical theories about the nature of consciousness. Constraint of space does not allow me to develop these theories here. I shall simply draw the attention of my readers to some of these conceptions in the hope that it steers those who are interested in such accounts in the right direction.

Among the empirical theories, we find a lot of discussion of the relation of the mind and the food one eats,[50] which in later writings finds expression in the *Bhagavad Gītā* in the idea that different kinds of food produce various mental temperaments, the *sāttvika*, the *rājasika*, and the *tāmasika*.[51] There are also discussions regarding the relation between

attention and breathing, the ideas which become central to the theory and practice of *yoga*.[52]

We also find in the Upaniṣads one of the earliest classifications of the various mental functions. It is worth noting that the Upaniṣads make a distinction among different mental states and construe various cognitive and conative states to be different functions of the mind. For example, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* discusses the following mental modes: desire, decision or determination, doubt, belief, disbelief, retention, non-retention, shame, cognition, and fear. Of these, doubt, belief, disbelief, retention, non-retention, and cognition are different kinds of cognition; shame and fear are emotions; and desire and determination are conations.[53] The *Aitareya Upaniṣad* lists the following: 'sensation, perception, ideation, conception, understanding, insight, resolution, opinion, imagination, feeling, memory, volition, conation, the will to live, desire, and self-control', and further adds that 'all these are different names of intellection'.[54]

The Upaniṣads also draw attention to a controversy regarding the primacy of the will (*saṃkalpaḥ*) versus the primacy of the intellect (*cittaṃ*). For example, the following passage from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* categorically asserts the primacy of the will:

> All these therefore ... centre in will, consist of will, abide in will. Heaven and earth willed, air and ether willed, water and fire willed. Through the will of heaven and earth, rain falls; through the will of rain, food wills; through the will of food, the vital airs will; through the will of the vital airs, the sacred hymns will; through the will of the sacred hymns, the sacrifices will; through the will of the sacrifices, the world wills; through the will of the world, everything wills. This is Will. Meditate on Will. He who meditates on Will as brahman ... he is, as it were, lord and master as far as Will reaches—he who meditates on Will as Brahman.[55]

However, at another place, the same Upaniṣad also goes on to affirm the primacy of the intellect, when it says:

> Intellect is better than Will. For it is only when a man thinks that he wills ... All these centre in Intellect, consist of Intellect, abide in Intellect. Therefore, if a man does not think, even if he knows much, people say of him, he is nothing ... But if a man thinks, even though he knows little, people indeed desire to listen to him. Intellect is the centre, Intellect is the self, Intellect is the support of all these. Meditate on Intellect. He who meditates on Intellect as Brahman ... he is, as it were, lord and master as far as Intellect reaches—he who meditates on Intellect as Brahman.[56]

Another topic in the Upaniṣads that influenced the later philosophies is the theme of the four states of consciousness: waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and *turīya*. Various hypotheses are proposed in the Upaniṣads on the nature of sleep. One is the so-called fatigue theory, which using the analogy of a bird proposes that when a person is exhausted he retires into sleep.[57] Some other theories are: sleep is caused by the senses being absorbed in the mind,[58] or by the soul retiring in the arteries, and so on.[59] Some authors propose a more metaphysical theory to the effect that in deep sleep the soul is one with the brahman.[60] Connected with these are the various explanations of dreaming. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* locates the dream state as an intermediate state in between waking consciousness and deep-sleep consciousness. It states that apart from the two spatial locations—in this world and in the other world—there is a third intermediate place, the dream state, in which a person sees both this world and the other world, and taking the materials from both the worlds, reconstructs himself. The person becomes self-illuminated.[61] We are also told how in the state of dream consciousness the self is creatively active insofar as it creates such dream objects as horses, chariots, joys, and sorrows.[62] Dream consciousness might have provided the suggestion to many later philosophers that consciousness can play a creative role with regard to its objects. One could argue that Vasubandhu's *vijñāpatimātratāsiddhi* makes use of this idea. The Vijñānavādin Buddhists, who propose that consciousness creates the objects making them appear 'as though' they are external, use the language of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* regarding the creativity of dream consciousness.

In short, the Upaniṣadic ideas profoundly influenced all later Hindu and Buddhist speculations on the nature of consciousness. A distinction was made between the mind and *cit* or consciousness, and to regard the former, the mind, as a faculty influenced by empirical conditions and regard *cit* as the transcendental source of all manifestations. The distinctions referred to earlier between different mental temperaments determined by food and drinks, in that case, would concern the modes of *prakṛti*, while the pure *cit* would remain unaffected by these variations as a mere witness-consciousness.[63] This distinction is also found in the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools of Indian philosophy. The Advaita Vedānta argues that the *cit* or consciousness is experienced in the fourth state, *turīya*, and not in the first three. This notion of the self—remaining the same in all three states, being the self-effulgent light—clearly anticipates the later notion of the witness-consciousness. Again, the description of the self as self-luminous (*svayaṃjyoti*) in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,

where the ultimacy of the self is again explicated by indicating that the seer is unseen and that the knower cannot be known, foreshadows the notion of the witness-consciousness. The idea of the fourth state of consciousness, *turīya*, plays an important role in the writings of the Advaita Vedānta philosophers. Śaṃkara in his commentary on *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* describes *turīya* as the effulgent and all-pervasive source of the knowledge of objects.[64] It exists in all beings during the waking and the dreaming states, and is called the seer of everything. There is nothing besides *turīya*.

To sum up, the Upaniṣads reiterate one central point: consciousness is a necessary presupposition of all knowing. To say that there are things and no consciousness is self-contradictory. It is also different from the perceptual triad—the perceiver, the act of perceiving, and the perceived object. It is pure consciousness. It is of the nature of light; it is self-luminous.

Notes

1. CU, 6, 8 and 10.
2. *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, 3.1.3.
3. BU, 1.4.10.
4. MAU, 1.2.
5. BU, 3.4.2.
6. Ibid., 4.3.6.
7. Ibid., 3.7.23.
8. Ibid., 4.3.9.
9. Ibid., 2.1.16.
10. Ibid., 2.1.19.
11. Yājñavalkya appears twice in BU, first in a verbal contest with other brahmins and subsequently in a dialogue with King Janaka of Videha.
12. Ibid., 4.3.6. Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine. I have tried to give a translation of some of the passages in readable English to make it accessible to my readers without jeopardizing the integrity of the Sanskrit texts.
13. Ibid., 4.3.7.
14. Ibid., 4.3.18.
15. Ibid., 4.3.19.
16. Ibid., 4.3.21.
17. Ibid., 4.3.23.
18. Ibid., 4.3.30.

19. CU, Chapter VI.

20. Ibid., 6.1.4–5.

21. Ibid., 6.2.1; 6.8.6–7.

22. These three elements anticipate the conception of the three *guṇas* which are mentioned for the first time in the *Atharva Veda* (x.8.43), and subsequently, here. These three basic material constituents are described in the *Śvetāśvatra Upaniṣad* (4.5) as the red, white, and black constituents of *prakṛti*, and they eventually find their way into the Sāṃkhya school as *rajas*, *sattva*, and *tamas*.

23. CU, 6.12.3.

24. Ibid., 8, 7–12.

25. Ibid., 8.9.1.

26. Ibid., 8.11.1.

27. Ibid., 8.12.1.

28. *jāgaritasthāno bahiṣprajñaḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ sthūlabhugvaiśvanaraḥ prathamaḥ pādaḥ*. MAU, 3.

svapnasthāno ekonaviṃśatimukhaḥ praviviktabhuk taijaso dvitīyaḥ pādaḥ. Ibid., 4.

yatra supto na kañcana kāmaṃ kāmayate, na kañcana svapnaṃ paśyati, tat suṣuptam suṣuptasthāna ekībhutaḥ prajñānaghana evānandmayo hyānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ prājñastṛtīyaḥ pādaḥ. Ibid., 5.

29. CU, 5.18.2. provides a description of the seven limbs:

tasya ha vā etasyātmano vaiśvānarasya mūrdhaiva sutejāḥ, cakṣur viśvarūpaḥ, prāṇaḥ pṛthagvartmātmā, samdeho bahulaḥ, bastir eva rayiḥ, pṛthvī eva pādāv, ura eva vediḥ lomāni barhiḥ hṛdayaṃ gārhapatyaḥ, mano' nvāhārya-pacanaḥ, āsyam āhavanīyaḥ. Of this universal self, the head is the intense light, the eye is the universal form, the breath is (the air) of diverse courses, the trunk is vast, the bladder is the wealth, the feet are the earth, the chest is the altar, the hair is the sacred grass, the heart is the *gārhapatyaḥ* fire, the mind is the *anvāhārya pacanaḥ* fire and the mouth is the *āhavanīyaḥ* fire.

The passage elucidates an essential one-to-one correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm—just as there is a consciousness that animates our physical body, there is similarly a consciousness that animates the physical universe. This consciousness resides in all beings. It is called *vaiśvānara* (*viśva* = the cosmos + *nara* = man), the cosmic man. There is one man or one consciousness that is immanent in everything, conscious and unconscious. It is important to remember in this context that in saying that the consciousness has seven limbs, one is only giving the rough contours of his personality. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that this consciousness has infinite limbs, rather than seven limbs.

30. The nineteen mouths are concerned with the microcosmic aspect of the consciousness, the state of I-ness. They are: the five organs of sense (hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell), the five organs of action (speech, hands,

locomotion, generation, and excretion), the five vital breaths, the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), the ego-sense (*ahaṃkāra*), and the mind-stuff (*citta*). The nineteen mouths thus pertain to the multiple functions of the self and depict the self as a finite individual different from the real self. We consume things via the mouth, which are assimilated in our bodies, so to speak. The five organs of sense, the five organs of action, and the five vital breaths refer to the outer core of the individual's activity. The remaining four—the mind, the intellect, the ego-sense, and the mind-stuff—refer to the inner core of the individual.

31. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 71. Hereafter this book will be cited as *Outlines*.

32. CU, 8.11.1.

33. BU, 1.4.7.

34. Ibid., 3.4.2.

35. Ibid., 4.4.22.

36. Ibid., 3.7.23.

37. Bina Gupta, *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta: Epistemological Analysis and Interpretation* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1991), p. 56. Hereafter this book will be cited as *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta*.

38. BU, 4.3.9.

39. Ibid., 4.3.21–2.

40. Ibid., 4.3.30.

41. Ibid., 4.3.23.

42. 'People normally experience deep sleep as a state of unconsciousness, not one of objectless consciousness.' Joel Brereton, *Approaches to Asian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). See his chapter on 'The Upanishads', in this book. The article contains a very lucid discussion of the basic ideas of the major Vedic Upaniṣads.

43. For example, see K.C. Bhattacharyya, *The Subject as Freedom* (Bombay: The Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1930).

44. See Śaṃkara's commentary on MAU, 12.

45. See Śaṃkara's commentary on *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* 12. For a readable translation of *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā*, readers might wish to consult *The Māṇḍūkyapaniṣad with Gauḍapāda's Kārikā and Śaṃkara's Commentary*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, 1974).

46. Plato, *Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), Bk VI, XIX, pp. 508–9.

47. Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, ed. Thomas Gilby (New York: Doubleday, 1969), Summa Theologiae I. Q. 12 a. 2.

48. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (London: Barnes and Noble Publishers, 1949), chapter VI, sec. 2. For a criticism of Ryle's account, see J.N. Mohanty, 'The concept of consciousness', in *Phenomenology and Ontology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 163–9.

49. BU, 4.3.9.
50. CU, 6.5.4.
51. BG 17, 9–10.
52. CU, 1.3.3.
53. BU, 1.5.3. For a discussion of some of the ideas mentioned in this section, readers might wish to consult, R.D. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of the Upaniṣadic Philosophy* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), p. 84. Henceforth this book will be cited as Ranade.
54. *Aitareya Upaniṣad,* 3.2; Ranade, p. 85.
55. CU, 7.4.2.
56. Ibid., 7.5.1; Ranade, p. 85.
57. BU, 4.3.19.
58. *Praśna Upaniṣad,* 4.3.19.
59. CU, 8.6.3.
60. Ibid., 6.8.1.
61. BU, 4.3.9.
62. Ibid., 4.3.9–18.
63. I shall discuss this concept in my chapter on Advaita Vedānta.
64. See Śaṃkara's commentary on *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* 12.

3

The Objectivist Theory of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika[1]

In the first chapter of this book, I noted that all the empirical theories of consciousness, of which the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā[2] are prime examples, might be regarded as objectivist theories. It seems appropriate to classify them in this fashion, because consciousness in these theories is itself as much an object as any other object.[3] It certainly has some distinguishing features, the most important being that it alone makes objects known or manifested (*arthaprakāśobuddhi*; *buddhi* is the same as consciousness in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika). But is spite of this special feature, consciousness itself is still an object. Like other objects, it has its own causal conditions, its own coming into being and passing out of being, and it is manifested by *another* consciousness. Everything in the world, then, is an object—so also is consciousness. As a special kind of object, consciousness is definable by its intentionality, that is, its intrinsic reference to an object. In the technical language of Nyāya, it is *saviṣayaka*. There is no mere awareness, no objectless consciousness, no consciousness that does not belong to someone, or does not inhere[4] in some self.

I

The main features of the Nyāya theory of consciousness may be formulated as follows:

- Consciousness is a quality of the self.
- Consciousness alone has the irreducible quality of being of-an-object (*svābhāvika viṣayapravaṇatvam*). In other words, it is intentional. In this regard, it is different from such other qualities as pleasure and pain.

- It arises when certain appropriate conditions are present.
- It is not eternal—it is produced and destroyed.
- It is *nirākāra*, that is, formless.
- It is *paraprakāśa*, not *svayaṃprakāśa*, i.e, it is manifested by another consciousness, it is not self-manifesting.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the Upaniṣads take *cit* or consciousness to be the same as ātman. This, however, is not the case with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of Indian philosophy. Ātman, for this school, includes both the finite individual selves (and souls) as well as the infinite soul, that is, God. Gotama, the founder of the Nyāya school, provides his readers with a list of *prameyas* or objects of true knowledge, and this list begins with *ātmā*. Vātsyāṇa states:

> The omniscient self is the seer, the enjoyer and the experiencer of all things, the body is the place of its enjoyment and suffering, and the sense organs are the instruments for enjoyment and suffering. Enjoyment and suffering are cognitions (of pleasure and pain). The inner sense or *manas* is that which can know all objects. Action (*pravṛtti*) causes all pleasure and pain; so do the *doṣas* (defects), namely, passion, envy, and attachment. The self had earlier bodies than this one, and will occupy other bodies after this one, until the achievement of '*mokṣa*'.This beginningless succession of birth and death is called '*pretyabhāva*'. Experiences of pleasure and pain, along with their instruments, i.e. body, sense organs, etc., are the 'fruit' (*phala*). 'Pain' is inextricably connected with 'pleasure'. In order to achieve *mokṣa* or *apavarga*, one should realize that all happiness is pain—which will result in detachment and, in the long run, freedom.[5]

The above list includes not only the objects of true knowledge, but also such things as body, sense organs, objects (of these senses), intellect (*buddhi*), mind (*manas*), action (*pravṛtti*), defects (*doṣa*), the succession of birth and death (*pretyabhāva*), fruit (*phala*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and release (*mokṣa*)[6]. Given that 'ātman' for the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is the knower, the enjoyer, and the agent, in this chapter we shall not follow the usual translation of the 'ātman' as 'soul'. But we will translate it as 'self'.

After this list of entities, the next *sūtra* proceeds to tell its readers how the 'self' (or the ātman) is known.[7] The self is too 'subtle', and cannot be perceived by any of the senses. Such judgements as 'I am happy', 'I am sad', do not provide any knowledge of the true nature of the self. Hence, the obvious question: how is the self known? It is said that the self can be inferred from a series of such marks as pleasure,

pain, desire, hatred, effort, and consciousness. These six are specific qualities of the self, insofar as they belong *only* to the self. Of these six, three, namely, desire, effort, and consciousness, are common to both finite selves and the infinite self, that is, God; two—hatred and pain—are found only in the finite selves; and the sixth, namely, happiness, belongs both to the individuals and to God, though God's happiness is eternal, while the happiness of finite individuals is non-eternal.

A cursory glance at the above marks reveals that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas regard consciousness as a *guṇa* (quality).[8] The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas enumerate twenty-four *guṇas* of the self.[9] Consciousness is one of these twenty-four, and—like happiness, misery, desire, aversion, volition, merit, demerit, and sound—is subtle (*amūrta*) and belongs to a non-material substance. Of these nine qualities, six, namely, consciousness, happiness, misery, desire, aversion, and volition, are apprehended by the inner sense.

In their ontological scheme, if a particular is not a substance,[10] it could either be a *guṇa* or a karma (action). Consciousness, being partless and perishable, cannot be a substance. Actions, on the other hand, involve motion; consciousness, however, has no spatial movement. Since it can be neither a substance nor an action, it can only be a quality. One argument often advanced to support the thesis that consciousness is a quality runs as follows: consciousness is a quality, for though non-eternal, it can be apprehended only by one sense (that is, by the *manas*, that is, the inner sense), as is 'colour'.[11] The Naiyāyikas further argue that no quality can have an independent existence, apart from that of which it is a quality. Thus, given that consciousness is a quality, it cannot have any independent existence of its own; it must inhere and belong to some substance. The question arises: whose quality is it?

In response, the Naiyāyikas point out that it could either be a quality of the self, or of the body[12] that the self occupies, or of the senses, or of the mind (*manas*). The Naiyāyikas take great pains to demonstrate that it is neither a quality of the body, nor of the sense organs, nor of an action; it is rather a quality of the self.

The Cārvākas[13] (the materialists) argue that consciousness inheres and belongs to the body. The Naiyāyikas vehemently criticize this conception of Cārvākas. They agree with the Cārvākas insofar as the Cārvākas assert that a quality cannot have an independent existence of its own, but argue that consciousness cannot be a quality of the body for the following reasons.

Consciousness cannot be a quality of the body, because it is not found in dead bodies. A body continues to exist even in the absence of consciousness. If it were a property of the body, it would also exist in the different parts of the body and also in the ultimate ingredients, that is, the *bhūtas*, of which a body is composed. In that case, consciousness would exist in the different parts of the body when the body is separated and divided in different parts. However, there is no consciousness in the parts and the constituents of the body; therefore, consciousness cannot be a property of the body.

They further argue that it is absurd to maintain that consciousness is a quality either of the material elements or of a combination of the constituents of these elements for the following reasons:

1. activity and the absence of activity are the only indicators of desire, aversion, and so on, which are not found in the material elements;
2. the Cārvāka view amounts to arguing that there are several cognizers within one single body, which is ridiculous; and
3. the body, the sense, etc., are guided and controlled by another principle, that is, the soul.

Material constituents are inert like external objects. Our inability to experience consciousness apart from the body does not prove that it is a property of the body. Coexistence of two things, say, A and B, does not prove that one is the property of the other. If this were the case, one could argue that visual perception is a property of light, because visual perception cannot take place in the absence of light. Light is only an auxiliary to the visual perception; similarly, the body is a mere auxiliary to consciousness. It might be argued that the intoxicating quality in wine originates when certain ingredients are combined in a fixed proportion. Similarly, consciousness originates when the material elements are combined in a definite proportion. In response, the Naiyāyikas point out that the intoxicating quality of wine is found in the smallest quantity of wine, however, consciousness is never found when the material body is divided and separated in parts, say, in an arm of the body, or a leg of the body. In other words, material body cannot be the locus of consciousness; it can only belong to a self.[14]

The Naiyāyikas hold that consciousness cannot be a property of the senses either. The self is the experiencer in the true sense of the term. In our everyday lives, we experience such things as 'table', 'a block of ice', from different senses, which implies the existence of a coordinator

different from the senses of sight and touch. Senses have an instrumental function; they are for the use of an agent, and this agent is the self.

Consciousness cannot be a property of the mind either because our thoughts, ideas, and feelings change continuously, very much like the changes one sees in one's body, and the mind could no more be the substratum of consciousness than the body could. Consciousness cannot be a quality of the mind,[15] because only the self is a knower. The sense organs, the outer and the inner, cannot be the knowers because they possess dependent existence, whereas the self is independent. Additionally, qualities such as desire, aversion, activity, pleasure, and pain must belong to the same locus as consciousness, because the same entity that cognizes a thing, also desires to acquire it or stay away from it; it also acts to possess or discard it, and on attaining the desired goal experiences pleasure. Since consciousness does not belong either to the body, or to the senses, or to the mind, it must belong to the self.

Thus, the Naiyāyikas conclude that consciousness is an attribute of the self, which exists independently and is different from the body, the senses, the mind, and consciousness. The self, on their theory, is eternal; it cannot be produced or destroyed. Though consciousness is a quality of the self, it nevertheless is not an essential quality of the self. This explains why the self does not possess consciousness in deep sleep or coma. The self may exist without consciousness but is, however, capable of having consciousness when the appropriate causal conditions are present, that is, when the self comes in contact with the mind, the mind with the senses, and the senses with external objects. (These contacts are needed in the case of all kinds of cognitions, including testimony and inference.) In other words, the self, though eternal, is by itself unconscious and thus not different from material objects such as table and chair, excepting for the fact that the self alone is *capable* of having consciousness.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception differs substantially from other views, for example, the views of the Vedic *ādhyātmika* or spiritual systems such as Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta. In this context, we must keep in mind a fundamental difference between the Nyāya and the schools of Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta. For the Naiyāyikas, the terms '*buddhi*', '*upalabdhi*', and '*jñāna*' are synonymous.[16] On the Sāṃkhya and Advaita Vedānta view, on the other hand, *buddhi* is a modification of *prakṛti*; it is the first evolute of *prakṛti*, it is the cosmic intelligence (*mahat*), while '*jñāna*' or consciousness is the nature of the self (or *puruṣa*). 'Knowledge' (for example, the perceiving of a pitcher) is a

modification (*vṛtti*) of *buddhi*, in which consciousness is reflected. The Naiyāyikas reject the above account of cognitive states, because on their account there is no consciousness per se; there is indeed a universal 'consciousness' that is instantiated in every cognitive state. 'Consciousness,' in short, stands for all particular cognitive states. Such states—as perceiving, inferring, desiring, recognizing, remembering, etc.—are called either *buddhi*, *jñāna*, or *upalabdhi*. These cognitive states arise in a self when the appropriate causal conditions are present. It is important to remember that the self, though a 'conscious' substance, does not always and under all circumstances possess consciousness (as already noted, it is not conscious when it is in a deep sleep, or in a coma). This only means that the self can have consciousness, that the ability to have consciousness essentially belongs to a self.

II

The issues whether consciousness is formless (*nirākāra*) or has a form (*sākāra*) and whether it is of-an-object (*saviṣaya*) or objectless (*nirviṣaya*) are enormously complicated. It is not possible to unpack the ramifications of these issues in their entirety in this chapter. The fact that almost all schools of Indian philosophy have discussed these issues testifies to their importance and makes my task all the more difficult. Rather than going into the minute details of their arguments, I shall, for my present purposes, highlight some of the key points of the Nyāya conception vis-à-vis the other schools of Indian philosophy, in the hope that this discussion will help my readers understand better the Nyāya theory of consciousness.

In order to understand whether consciousness is *nirākāra* or *sākāra*, it is imperative that we understand what is meant by *ākāra* in this context. '*Ākāra*' refers to the specific arrangement of the parts of a thing. In this sense, the external objects are said to have an *ākāra*, because they have a shape and a form. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā, the realist schools of Indian philosophy, which argue for the existence of external objects, deny any form to consciousness. The Yogācāra Buddhists, on the other hand, oppose the realist conception, and given that they deny external objects, argue that the form belongs to consciousness. The Buddhists argue that the perceptual knowledge, say, 'this is an elephant', itself has the form of elephant, whereas the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas hold that this perceptual knowledge in itself is formless. The Buddhists' position conforms to their idealistic stance that the apparent form of the object is

really a form of consciousness, and when needed, they use their idealism to substantiate their thesis that consciousness has a form. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the Mīmāṃsā thesis conforms to its realism, because the form that appears in consciousness or cognition does not, and cannot, belong to that cognition, which in itself is formless and accordingly it must belong to an object outside of knowledge. It is important to emphasize that the issue—whether consciousness is formless or has a form—is in the Indian philosophical discourse connected with the debate between idealism and realism. Theories, for example, of the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā schools, which regard consciousness as formless have to be realistic, the object of consciousness on these accounts must fall outside consciousness. On the other hand, a theory, for example, of the Buddhists, which regards cognitions to have forms, may very well contend that the objects which appear to be outside are really forms of consciousness.

It is interesting to note that although the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas mean by 'consciousness' only specific cognitive states—for example, seeing a physical object, hearing sound—these specific cognitive states are described as formless or *nirākāra*. Consciousness of an elephant, for example, could not have the *ākāra* of an elephant; it could only have the elephant image. The mental picture of an elephant is like an elephant, but the cognition of an elephant is not like an elephant. Cognition, therefore, is not a mental picture. The cognition of an elephant and the cognition of a horse differ not with regard to their internal content or *ākāra* or imagery, but only insofar as one object is a horse and the other object is an elephant. In themselves, apart from their objects and apart from the souls in which they inhere, there is nothing to distinguish one cognition from another. Consciousness of an elephant does not contain something like an elephant within it. So one possible translation of *ākāra* is the cognitive content, the 'content' as distinguished from the object.[17] According to the standard analysis of knowledge in Western philosophy, cognition of an elephant and cognition of a horse, quite apart from the two objects that are out there in the world, differ also in the internal structure of their cognitions, that is, in their content. This is to say, on this theory, the cognition of an elephant has an 'elephant-content' and the cognition of a horse the 'horse-content'. The Western epistemological theories insist on the distinction between the object and the content primarily because in some cases—for example, in the cases of non-veridical cognition—the object may not be there, though something appears in consciousness; in such cases what appears could only be the content, and not the actual object.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika does not entertain this possibility, but rather prevents this possibility by developing a theory of non-veridical cognition,[18] in which as in veridical cognitions, the so-called cognitive contents are really objects out in the world. For the Naiyāyikas, sense contact with the object is the primary and indispensable condition of all knowledge. They further maintain that the senses can be in contact not only with their objects, qualities, and universals but also with their absences. All perceptual knowledge can be expressed in the form of a judgement, a subject with something predicated of it. A percept, such as 'a cow', really stands for a judgement. 'A cow,' for example, 'means an object possessing the characteristic of cowness'. In the cases of perceptual illusions, the sense comes in contact with the real object; however, because of the presence of certain external and internal factors, it is associated with the wrong characteristics, and the object is misapprehended. In other words, the object which is elsewhere (*anyathā*) now appears in front of us.[19] Consequently for the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, and also for the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā,[20] there is nothing within consciousness which appears in consciousness. Everything that appears in consciousness is really outside of it. As a matter of fact, one might even want to say that in this theory, consciousness has no inside. The Nyāya realism is based on it. Although it is itself inner in the sense that it is grasped by the inner sense, it itself has no inner component or constituent and so its being is totally exhausted by its reference to its object, that is, by its intentionality.

The Nyāya conception that consciousness is not a substance mandated that they reject the Buddhist account of consciousness as a series of events. However, on the Nyāya account, consciousness is not only not a substance; it is also not an action. There are those who argue that a theory of consciousness as an action is needed to substantiate and strengthen realism, because the idea of consciousness as an action accounts for the difference between the object per se and the object as known, that is, the difference between a *vastu* (the actual object) and *viṣaya* (the intentional content).[21] The best-known exponent of this view in Indian philosophy is the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school of Indian philosophy. They argue that a sound theory of epistemology must begin with the distinction between the object per se and the same object as known. An act has the power to account for this difference, and indeed brings about this difference in the object under consideration. The act of knowing transforms a mere object into a known object. Additionally, the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas argue that since the cognitive act itself is not known when the object is known, but is rather inferred, what is initially apprehended

is neither the cognition nor the object, but something other than these two. Accordingly, they question the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thesis that consciousness is not an action. Why, they ask, must we define an action in terms of motion in space? Why not leave room for exactly the kind of action that consciousness exemplifies?

The theory that consciousness is an act on the part of the soul is not free from difficulties, the primary one being that an action must result in some effect or some change in the object on which it is exercised. It is not obvious what changes consciousness does bring about in its object. The only possible change could be that the object, which was unknown, becomes known, or that of which I was unaware, I now become aware. But this change is not a change in the object, one might reply; if at all, it is a change in the soul of the person who *now* has a new state of consciousness. Therefore, if consciousness must be regarded as an act, it must be so in very special sense of the act (*kriyā*). But in what sense?

It is here that the idea of the intentional acts of Western phenomenology comes to our rescue. By an act, a phenomenologist understands not an activity in the familiar sense, but any experience, which is directed towards an object. But this is already recognized in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, even though they regard consciousness as a quality. The truth, therefore, seems to be, apart from the applicability of the precise categories that they have, that consciousness seems to be both a quality and an act, it both seems to inhere in the soul and refer to an object other than itself. The Prabhākara Mīmāṃsakas seem to have held such a view, that is, consciousness is both a *guṇa* and a karma. As belonging to a soul, consciousness is a *guṇa*, as manifesting an object, it is a *kriyā*. They are simply two aspects of the nature of consciousness. The Naiyāyikas do not subscribe to this conception. For them, consciousness is a quality, and it is distinguished from other qualities by being of-an-object.

Though consciousness is a quality, it is different from other qualities such as pleasure and pain. Whereas consciousness is always cognitive, pleasure, pain, etc., are not in themselves cognitive; they are affective. Such qualities as pleasure and pain, although intentional like consciousness, derive their intentionality from that consciousness which presents the objects. For example, in the instance 'I am happy about X', the object of my happiness, X, is first an object of cognition or consciousness, and then through it an object of happiness. It is important to remember here that for the Naiyāyikas, knowing is a temporal act directed towards an object. It is expressed in such perceptual[22] judgements

as 'this is a table'. Here, the table is the object of knowledge. On their view, such a cognition (*vyavasāya*) reveals only the object—it does not reveal either the cognizer or the cognition. This primary cognition is revealed by a second introspective awareness in the form 'I know the table', or 'I have knowledge of the table'. This second cognition—the cognition of the primary cognition—is termed *anuvyavasāya.* Whereas the object of the primary cognition is the table, the direct object of the second cognition is the primary cognition, the indirect objects being the self and the object of the primary cognition. The Naiyāyikas further argue that the *anuvyavasāya* of the primary act of cognition is infallible and intrinsically true, a position that makes sense from a phenomenological perspective. Both Vācaspati and Udayana reiterate this point: 'No one who does not have knowledge introspects "I am knowing", no one who has the introspection "I am knowing a silver" when in fact he has knowledge of a shell.'[23]

Thus, the Naiyāyika account of consciousness is very different from the Advaita account, in which it is argued that when a subject apprehends an object, the object undoubtedly is revealed; however, it is not the *only* thing that is revealed. It is accompanied by the apprehension of apprehension. When I say, 'this is a table', I not only know the table, but also know that I know that this is a table. The two apprehensions occur simultaneously. 'This is a table' is an instance of perception; however, the perception itself is apprehended by the witness-consciousness.[24] I shall discuss this concept in the chapter on the Advaita account of consciousness. Suffice it to note here that consciousness on the Advaita account reveals or manifests objects; it is *svaprakāśa*, as well as *svataḥsiddha* (self-established). It cannot be apprehended by any of the six means of true cognition, because the objects known by them presuppose the existence of the self; thus they cannot be used to prove the existence of the self or consciousness. It cannot be known by another consciousness either, because such reasoning will lead to an infinite regress of consciousness. Nor can it be known by itself. It is apprehended by the witness-consciousness, which cannot be an object of knowledge, and thus it does not become the content of true cognition (*pramāviṣaya*); it is the very condition of the possibility of knowing anything.

The self is the subject and cannot become both the subject and the object at once. Moreover, the self as the 'I' is not the real self. The real self is pure consciousness; it is not consciousness of anything. The opponents, the Naiyāyikas, argue that since the witness-consciousness is not accessible through any of the recognized means, it cannot be known

by any of the *pramāṇas*; it is not established by the scriptures either; the self-luminous witness-consciousness, therefore, does not exist.[25]

III

The above discussion leads me to another important issue, the issue that has preoccupied the Indian tradition dating back to the era of the Upaniṣads. It has to do with the self-luminosity of consciousness. We must determine what is being cognized in a cognition. Is a cognition cognized when an object is being cognized? Or, is it the case that cognition is cognized by a subsequent cognition after the object has been cognized? To formulate the questions differently: is a state of consciousness (perception, idea, etc.) known to the cognizer at the moment of its very inception? Or, is it cognized subsequently by another cognition? In other words, is a state of consciousness merely intentional, that is, object-directed?

Indian philosophers' responses roughly fall under three groups:

1. Consciousness or a cognitive state only shows its object, but not itself. Cognition is known by a subsequent cognition, which objectifies the primary cognition.
2. A cognitive event, though letting its own object be known, is itself known by an inferential cognition.
3. A state of consciousness not only reveals the object but also itself. Knowing an object, in other words, implies eo ipso knowing that one knows.

The first is the Nyāya view, the second the Bhāṭṭa view, and the third is shared by the Buddhists, the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, the Viśiṣṭādvaita, and the Advaita Vedānta schools of Indian philosophy. Given that the first and the third represent the two extreme positions on the issue, and the second lies in between the two, I shall begin with the second, and then return to the controversy between the remaining two.

For the Bhāṭṭas, consciousness is not self-luminous. In other words, it is not directly and immediately accessible. It is essentially an act (*vyāpāra*). They argue that, in apprehending an object, consciousness or cognition does not apprehend itself. Consciousness or cognition is of the nature of light only insofar as it illuminates external objects though it depends on some activity to manifest it. Though consciousness illumines

the external object, it is not capable of illuminating itself. It depends on another act for its illumination. So when theBhāṭṭas claim that consciousness illuminates, they are simply referring to its ability to illuminate external objects, and not itself. Any act of cognition consists of four factors: the subject, the object, the instrument, and the result of cognition. Let us take the act of cooking rice, in which the cook is the agent, rice the object, the fire the instrument, and the cooked rice is the result. Just as the act of cooking produces 'cookedness' or the softness in the rice that is cooked, similarly cognition arises in the self and the cognizedness (*jñātatā*) is produced in the object known. We infer the existence of its cause, that is, cognition, from its effect, that is, cognizedness. In short, cognition or consciousness is inferred from the cognizedness of its object.

For the Naiyāyikas, as we have already seen, a state of consciousness, while manifesting its object, does not manifest itself. Ontologically, cognition for the Naiyāyikas is a quality of the self. This quality, a product of various causal factors, originates under special conditions and from an epistemological perspective, refers beyond itself to an object. Consciousness, better yet cognition, does not cognize itself—it reveals its object (*viṣaya*). Accordingly, cognition is related to the *viṣaya* by the relation of *viṣayatā*, that is, by making it an object. In response to the question of how a cognition cognizes itself, the Naiyāyikas maintain that a cognition is cognized in a secondary act of retrospection. The primary act does not cognize itself but only the external object, for example, a pitcher, in 'this is a pitcher' (*ayaṃ ghaṭaḥ*). However, the cognition 'I know that this is a pitcher' is different. It succeeds the first cognition and is called 'after (*anu*) cognition (*vyavasāya*)'.

The third view—of the Buddhists, the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, the Viśiṣṭadvaita, and the Advaita Vedānta—holds that consciousness is self-luminous which amounts to arguing that consciousness reveals not only the object but also itself. In short, a state of consciousness eo ipso knows itself, as well as its object. Notwithstanding the differences among them, these positions may be formulated as follows:

For the Yogācāra Buddhists, ideas alone are ultimately real. They argue that at its very occurrence a cognition simply reveals itself, and the object that appears in it is simply its form. The things that allegedly exist in the outside world can be experienced through mental processes. Of the three factors—the knower, the object known, and the knowledge—the last one alone is taken to be true. All we ever perceive are our own mental forms, and even consciousnessos appears to itself

as an external object. Consciousness is nothing but an ever-changing stream. The forms of the objects of knowledge, which any cognition assumes at any particular instant, are not determined by the reality of the external world but by ideas. Accordingly, the differences between cognitions of a wall and a pitcher are mental in character. Independent existence of external objects cannot be demonstrated. Because our knowledge of objects in the form of ideas and of the objects is presented simultaneously, they must be one and the same. In other words, no object is ever experienced apart from consciousness; and no consciousness apart from its object. Therefore, the two—better yet the allegedly two—must be in reality one and the same thing.[26]

The Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā argues that cognition, by its very being, reveals its object as object, its knower as knower, and itself as the knowledge. This threefold manifestation takes place simultaneously with the occurrence of knowledge, so that every knowledge has the form 'I know such and such object'. For the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, self-luminous consciousness illumines *itself (sva samvit)*, the knower *(aham samvit)*, and the object *(viṣaya samvit)*. Consciousness, like the light of a lamp, in one flash illumines these three factors. For them, consciousness is self-luminous, not the ātman. Both the external objects and the ātman are not luminous. Thus a cognition is luminous and it does not need another cognition to manifest it.

Rāmānuja,[27] known as '*ardhasvaprakāśavādi*', argues that consciousness manifests itself but only in certain conditions, not to all individuals at all times and under all conditions. Consciousness at the time of manifesting its object *(viṣayaprakāśanabelāyām)*, reveals itself to its own subject, that is, to the cognizer *(svāśrayaṃ prati)*. However, it does not reveal itself to another subject. In other words, 'consciousness manifests itself by its own being at the present moment to its own substrate'.[28] In concrete terms, it amounts to arguing that consciousness at times is self-luminous, whereas at other times it is not. In other words, to say that consciousness for Rāmānuja is self-luminous is misleading, if not false.

The Advaita Vedānta school argues that consciousness is self-luminous. Using the criterion of '*bādha*',[29] usually translated as 'sublation' or 'subration', Śaṃkara arrives at his ontological hierarchy. He argues that anything that in principle can be negated has lesser degree of reality than that which it is replaced by. Given this, to say that pure consciousness itself cannot be sublated by anything amounts to saying that it cannot be denied or disvalued by anything else; no experience can contradict

it. He makes a distinction among three levels:[30] *pāramārthika*, the level of pure consciousness; *vyavahārika*, the level of empirical consciousness; and *asat*, unreality or non-being.

To begin with unreality, it does not have any objective counterpart. In other words, it never becomes an object of consciousness. Consciousness at the empirical level is sublated by the experience of pure consciousness or the brahman, which cannot be sublated by any experience whatsoever. The Advaitins hold that empirical consciousness in reality is pure consciousness as conditioned by the appropriate mental modification (*antaḥkaraṇa vṛtti*). Although the objects are manifested by pure consciousness via the mental modifications, a mental modification itself is directly manifested by the witness-consciousness. A mental modification does not require another mental modification to make it manifest. So, in a sense, an empirical cognition is self-luminous, and there is no need of cognition of cognition.

Notwithstanding the differences among these four different accounts of the self-luminosity of consciousness, they all maintain that, 'I know' accompanies all states of consciousness, whereas according to the first, a state of consciousness, for example, 'this is an elephant', is different from 'I know this is an elephant'. Let us quickly review the ramifications of these conceptions in order to assess how the issue of self-luminosity of consciousness ties to the two issues discussed earlier—of intentionality and form or shape of consciousness—and the sort of ontology it leads to or presupposes.

For the Buddhists, consciousness not only manifests itself, but as stated earlier, it also has a form of its own. So, when I say, 'this is an elephant', the form of 'elephant' that appears must be the form of consciousness, and given that they deny the existence of external objects, the intentionality of consciousness points to the fact that the cognition of elephant is really a state of consciousness, having 'elephant' for its form.

Prābhākara argues that cognition is self-luminous and there is no need of cognition of cognition. It amounts to arguing that consciousness, a quality of the self, is luminous; it is independently lighted; the self, however, is devoid of it and depends on consciousness for its manifestation.

Rāmānuja, on the other hand, ties the intentionality of consciousness and self-luminous character of consciousness in such a way that consciousness manifests its presence *only* to its owner, *only* in the context of manifesting its object. Rāmānuja argues for a basic relationship between the self-luminosity and its intentionality in such a way that

consciousness manifests its own presence to its owner, only at the time of manifesting an object. It is worth noting here that Rāmānuja argues for the fundamental relation of inseparability (*apṛthak-siddhi*), which is neither identity nor identity and difference, but which welds two substances, or a substance and a quality, into one qualified (*viśiṣṭa*) unity. In many respects, it resonates the Vaiśeṣika relation of inherence (*samavāya*), though the idea of dependence is stronger than what the relation of inherence exemplifies.

The Nyāya, on the other hand, emphatically denies self-luminosity to consciousness and stresses its intrinsic intentionality. The system does not admit any movement on the part of the soul, and so the two, that ātman and consciousness, are not fundamentally related. In Nyāya ontology, *padārthas* possess being in some sense or the other. Accordingly, each *padārtha* has being of its own. Among these categories, the three (substance, quality, and action) are primary, and the remaining categories inhere in one of the three primary categories. So the Nyāya required a relationship which ties these entities together while preserving their differences. With the help of the relation of *samavāya*, the Naiyāyikas succeed in achieving a pluralistic ontology and a conception of the world in which substance and *samavāya* enjoy an élite status. Consciousness, they argue, is of-an-object, and there is no need to postulate it as an act that performs the function of altering its object. Consciousness under any condition is not self-manifesting, thus in cognition only the object is given, not the cognition. According to Nyāya realism, in the example, 'this is an elephant', only the object 'elephant' is given, without the apprehension 'I know this is an elephant'. For them, consciousness is neither inferred from the cognizedness (the Bhāṭṭa view), nor is cognized by itself (Vedānta and Yogācāra views), but is cognized by another cognition. Consciousness is *paraprakāśa*, it is not self-luminous. So, the Naiyāyikas conclude that a conception of cognition as self-luminous is not necessary; it does not serve any practical purpose whatsoever.

The Advaita Vedānta, which regards consciousness as both formless and self-manifesting, holds that consciousness per se is not intentional; it does not have an object or belong to an ego; intentionality is rooted in ignorance, on account of which consciousness appears to be *of* an object and *of* an ego. The Advaita Vedānta severely criticizes the Naiyāyika conception of the relation between ātman and consciousness, and argues that the relation between the two must be either of identity or of difference. Śaṃkara also puts their doctrine of categories under

devastating attack. On the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine of categories, there are many different types of real entities which, though independently real, are related by 'inherence' (*samavāya*). Śaṃkara—after raising the question as to the sense in which a substance and its quality, or a substance and its actions are, though inseparable yet distinct entities—concludes that the Vaiśeṣika thesis is untenable. Śaṃkara argues that in the final analysis all these entities are identical. The 'blue' and the 'lotus'—in 'the blue lotus'—are fundamentally identical, because the nature of a quality does not differ from the nature of the substance. The same substance, depending on the perspective, is called by different names, just as the same Bina Gupta is sometimes referred to as 'the mother of her daughter', 'the wife of her husband', 'the teacher of students', etc.[31] In reality, the *guṇa* and an action have their being in the substance (*dravyātmakatā guṇasya*). Accordingly, Śaṃkara concludes that there is only one category, namely, substance, and only one relation, namely, '*tādātmya*' ('being its essence'), a form of identity that 'tolerates' differences (*bhedasahiṣṇu*). Thus in 'the blue lotus', the relation between the colour 'blue' and the 'lotus' is not inherence of a quality in a substance, but *tādātmya* which is not mere identity, but 'the relation of having that (*tat*) as one's own self'. The consciousness and the self are the same; it is the unsublatable principle of all manifestation.

Śaṃkara then goes on to demonstrate that even the category of substance cannot be coherently stated. It entails 'difference', it could be the difference that exists among substances, difference of a substance from its qualities and actions, difference between the particular and the universals that it instantiates, and so on. The Advaita philosophers put the category of 'difference' under devastating attack and point out its inherent inconsistencies, for example, by showing how it gives rise to infinite regress and self-contradiction. By so doing, they call into question the ontological status and determinability of the category of 'difference'. They raise the question: is difference a relation or a quality? If X is different from Y, is X's difference from Y a quality of X? If so, it is then different from X itself. The same holds good of Y's difference from X. If difference is a relation between X and Y, one may ask, how is this relation itself related to X and to Y? By demonstrating that difference is not a real category, that it involves infinite regress on all counts, they demolish the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of categories and conclude that these categories are real only phenomenally; they are not real ontologically. These categories function in the empirical–conceptual context but not on the level of reality.

Whether consciousness is taken to be self-luminous or not has important consequences for a system's ontology. If consciousness is not taken to be self-luminous, it will result in a theory of consciousness in which consciousness would not be able to claim ontological independence and élite status. Self-luminosity of consciousness implies its immediacy thereby dissolving the subject–object distinction, which, in turn, leads us to a conception of consciousness in which it is existent, undifferentiated, and self-luminous. I shall revisit some of these issues in the chapters on Yogācāra and Advaita Vedānta.

IV

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory characterized by me as an objectivist theory has features which do not quite conform to an empirical account of consciousness. I shall bring to the attention of my readers two such features. These are its position that consciousness is a quality of the soul and its thesis that consciousness has no form of its own. Both need some explanation.

To consider the first: the soul or ātman on the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika view is certainly not a material substance but whether it is a spiritual entity or not is not entirely clear. Although consciousness on this theory requires the mediation of the body, it is nevertheless not a property of the body, but of the soul, which is eternal. Consciousness itself, however, is not eternal; it is subject to origination and cessation. Consciousness, though a property of the soul, is not an essential property of it. Thus, it is not obvious how or in what sense such an entity can be said to be spiritual. Consciousness arises in the soul when the soul is in conjunction with a body, the sense organs are in conjunction with some appropriate object or other, and the mind or the inner sense is in conjunction with the sense organ. What arises is a specific state of consciousness such as visual, tactual, or auditory perception. Having only momentary existence, consciousness is a process of events, each of which arises, exists, and then perishes. The objects of consciousness, although they are—as in any empirical theory—things of the world, are not only familiar sensory objects; they may be universals, or souls, or given suitable abilities—even atoms, or God. So we see that the Nyāya account is not entirely objectivist; it is certainly different from the account that one finds in the Cārvāka school, which incidentally is the only Indian philosophical system that offers a completely empirical theory of consciousness, describing

consciousness as a product of objective conditions (some of which are material), as inhering in the body, and as ceasing to be with the death of the body.

The above account of consciousness notwithstanding, the question arises: is the soul an object of empirical cognition? Again, on the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory, in such introspective judgements as 'I am happy', 'I am in pain', 'I am thinking', the indexical 'I' refers to the speaker's soul, but it is not the pure soul as such that is being known but rather the soul as qualified by a mental state. The pure soul still remains transcendent and in its state of liberation freed from the body, it is not even the seat of consciousness. This whole picture does indeed make consciousness dependent on the body and its relation to the soul, but in this relational complex, the soul, although an object in a very general sense, is far from being an empirical object.

The second point mentioned above concerns the question whether consciousness has a form or *ākāra*. This thesis of formlessness has serious implications for those who subscribe to it. It leads them to a realistic metaphysics, for as pointed out above, everything that appears in consciousness must be outside of it. I shall not pursue the issue of realism versus idealism here; this issue, though it falls within the purview of metaphysics, does not concern me here. The question that the Naiyāyikas must answer may be formulated as follows: how is this conception of consciousness—as formless, contentless, medium of reference to objects in the world—compatible with the picture of consciousness as an objective phenomenon which is caused by the objective conditions and which itself is the cause of objective effects? It is imperative that both cause and effect be determinate entities, having their determinate nature in themselves. The determinacy of the entity designated by the expression 'my cognition of that elephant' lies in the determinacy of the thing designated by the two expressions 'my' and 'that elephant'. But these two entities, on the Nyāya account, do not belong to that consciousness; they were there even before that cognition arose, and when the cognition arises, these two entities, namely, my soul and that elephant, do not become constituents of my cognition—they are out there in the world. It is, therefore, difficult to understand how the cognition itself could be a determinate entity so that it could be caused by, and be the cause of, determinate entities. What may be said to have been caused or brought about are not the mere formless cognition but the total entity 'my cognition of that elephant'. But how could this be one entity when my soul and that elephant, having their own independent existence before and after that cognition's existence, are not literally constituents of that

cognition. All three (my soul, that elephant, and the cognition) do not form a whole. What are the constituent elements constituents of? In what sense, even if cognition has no content, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika undertakes and gives an analysis of cognition?[32] The point is that for an analysis of cognition, especially for the sort of analysis that the Nyāya offers, a cognition, even if formless, must have such elements as *prakāratā*, *viśeṣyatā*, and *saṃsargatā*. We then see that a purely objectivist theory of consciousness as well as of cognition is not possible on the Nyāya account. If these elements are located in the object, the analysis is not of the cognition but rather of the object. So, even if a cognition is formless, one can venture the suggestion that it has *contents*, which permit logical analysis. Such a theory refuses to be accommodated within a purely empirical framework.

V

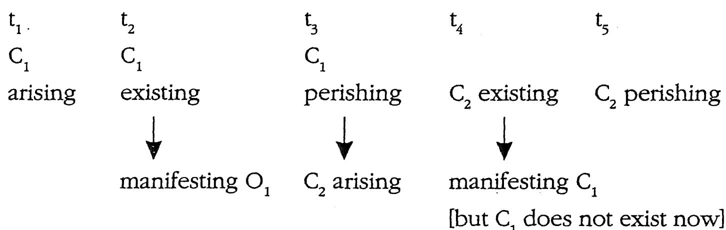
Before concluding this chapter, I shall discuss the most important Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thesis, the pivot around which their entire objectivist account revolves. This account depends on the claim that consciousness itself is known in the same way as any other object is known. We need to consider this claim, its supporting arguments, ramifications, and its weaknesses very carefully. The theory may be schematically represented thus:

1. If C_1 is a state of consciousness having for its object O_1, C_1 by its definition can manifest or make known only O_1, and not anything other than it.
2. Therefore C_1 cannot make itself manifest.
3. If it could manifest what is not its object it could manifest anything whatsoever, in which case, the awareness of a pitcher could also be the awareness of a mountain.
4. Therefore, it is most reasonable to insist that C_1 can only manifest O_1 and not itself.

How then is C_1 known? On the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory we need an act of introspection or retrospection (looking back)—an *anuvyavasāya* for this purpose. This amounts to saying that C_1 is followed by a new act of consciousness C_2 whose object is C_1. If C_1 has the form 'this is a cat', C_2 would have the form 'I know that this is a cat'. The actual mechanism of this is difficult to describe, but it would most probably run like this:

5. C_1 arises at the instant t_1; at t_2 it exists; at t_3 it perishes.
6. C_1 can exercise its function of manifesting O_1, only when it is—i.e., at t_2.
7. At t_3, C_1 ceases to be; but only at t_3 can C_2 then arise.
8. But this means that C_2 arising at t_3, exists at t_4.
9. C_2 can, therefore, exercise its function of manifesting C_1 at t_4.
10. But at t_4, C_1 does not exist.
11. So C_2 cannot be a perceptual knowledge of C_1, it can only be a memory of it.

But how can a memory of something be taken as possible, if it is supposed to be of something of which we were not even aware in the first place? On the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory we are not aware of C_1, although C_1 is aware of O_1 prior to C_2. So how could C_2 be a memory of C_1? The situation may be schematically represented thus:



In this context, I would like to note two objections against the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika objectivist thesis. One of these is not that strong and can be dispensed with easily. It is often held that the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika account leads to a *regresuum* ad infinitum. This argument is not as strong as it appears to be, for the Naiyāyikas need the succeeding C only if the preceding C is to be known for that purpose. In other words, C_2 is required if C_1 is to be known. But C_2 itself need not be known. Therefore, there is no infinite regress. On the contrary, there is a general epistemic rule that the conditions of outer perception are stronger than the conditions of inner perception. So if after C_2 the conditions of an outer visual perception present themselves, C_3 would not arise and the supposed outer perception would intervene.

The second is a strong objection to contend with. If C_2 is an inner perception of C_1, and if it does not arise automatically but requires the desire to know C_1, it is inexplicable how there could be a desire to know C_1, when C_1 on the theory is utterly unknown in the beginning. You do not desire to know something which was utterly unknown, you can only

desire to know something better than the way it was known earlier. So the possibility of inner perception, the so-called *anuvyavasāya*, requires that one is already familiar with C_1, although it is quite possible that one may want to take a closer look at it.

The Advaitins criticize the theory of *anuvyavasāya* and point out that even if for the sake of argument it is assumed that cognition is manifested by another cognition, the question arises: does the second cognition arise when the first cognition is existent or after it has been destroyed? The first option is impossible, because on Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thesis, two cognitions are not simultaneous, they are successive. The alternative too does not hold, because if the second cognition arises after the first one, what will the second cognition cognize, when the first cognition has ceased to exist?

If it were argued that the earlier cognition, while perishing, is manifested by the latter cognition, the question would arise as to what is meant by the 'state of perishing'. The Advaitins ask: 'Does the state of perishing of a cognition imply its existence or non-existence, or something which is different from both? If it implies "existence", there would be simultaneity of two cognitions; if "non-existence", how can a cognition, itself non-existent, be a perception (of the other)? If "neither existent nor nor-existent", it will be indescribable, and will not be able to establish any knowledge.'[33] They argue that in the absence of the witness-consciousness, there will be no way to apprehend a cognition.

Thus, it seems that either (1) the metaphysical thesis that states of consciousness exist only for one moment (besides the moments of origination and perishing) has to be revised, or (2) the epistemological thesis that a state of consciousness can directly manifest what is co-present with it, and not what is just gone, has to be revised. The former is done by the Vedāntins, who regard consciousness as not subject to origination and destruction at all; the latter alternative is chosen by Husserl when he argues that what is immediately apprehended is not merely the now, but also the just past. If one retains the temporality of consciousness, one needs Husserl's theory to make possible the awareness of awareness. In the absence of such an account, the Advaita theory, which distinguishes between the ever-present, unchanging principle of awareness on the one hand, and the changing modifications of the inner sense, or *antaḥkaraṇa*, on the other, will serve our purpose. Thus it seems that the objectivist theories of consciousness, in the long run, cannot be coherently formulated. Here, I cannot go into the issue whether a Husserlian type of account of time-consciousness is available in Indian

philosophy. If anywhere, perhaps in Buddhism we may look for it. So the Yogācāra Buddhists' account is what we have immediately available, and we shall turn our attention to it in the next chapter.

Notes

1. The Nyāya school most likely had its origin in its attempt to formulate canons of argument for use in debates, which pervaded the Indian philosophico-logical scene for a long time. The *Nyāya-Sūtras* probably date back from the third century BCE. These *sūtras* were commented on by Vātsyāyana (fifth century CE). Various authors such as Uddyotkāra (seventh century CE), Vācaspati (ninth century CE), Jayanta (tenth century CE), and Udayana (tenth century CE) develop the system. By the time of Udayana, the school of modern Nyāya, technically called Navya-Nyāya, was being formed, which received its final form in *Gaṅgeśa's Tattvacintāmaṇi*. The Naiyāyikas accept the ontology of the Vaiśeṣika school, and given that these two schools are closely allied in their realistic ontology, they are generally studied together.

2. 'Mīmāṃsā' literally means investigation or inquiry into the scriptural texts. It construes scriptural rules as a body of injunctions rather than as religious statements about God, the soul, and the world. As a school of Indian philosophy, Mīmāṃsa undertakes a systematic study of the Brāhmaṇās (guidelines for the performance of sacrifices) and subordinates the other parts of the Vedas (relating to hymns in praise of various deities and philosophic interpretations) to them. Vedānta, generally referred to as Uttara Mīmāṃsā, focuses its attention on the last (*uttara*) section of the Vedas, that is, the Upaniṣads, which provide the philosophic interpretation. A distinction is generally made between two schools of Mīmāṃsā, Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. The two exponents of these schools are Pābhākara and Kumārila respectively. The writings of these two individuals are the primary sources of our knowledge of the philosophies of these two schools.

For a short and incisive analysis of the history of this school, see P.V. Kane, A *Brief Sketch of the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā System* (Poona: Aryabhushan Press, 1924).

3. Gautama takes the term 'object' to signify three kinds of objects in the *Nyāya-Sūtra* (henceforth NS): the physical objects (e.g., table, chair, pitcher; 3.1.1); specific objects (e.g., colour, hard, soft; 1.1.14; 3.1.2; 3.1.58); and internal objects (e.g., pleasure and pain; 1.1.10).

4. In the Vaiśeṣika pluralistic ontology, inherence (*samavāya*) is the ontological glue, which welds together entities belonging to different categories thereby creating a unified world. Etymologically the term '*samavāya*' signifies coming together closely, and accordingly denotes an 'intimate union' between two things making them inseparable in such a way that they cannot be separated without themselves being destroyed. Annaṃbhaṭṭa defines *samavāya* as 'a

permanent connection existing between two things that are found inseparable'. *Tarka-Saṃgraha of Annaṃbhaṭṭa with Dīpikā and Govardhana's Nyāya-Bodhinī*, trans. Yashwant Vasudev Athalye, Sanskrit and Prakrit Series, no. 55 (Bombay: R.N. Dandekar, 1963), sec. 8, 96. Hereafter this edition will be cited as TSDNB.

The relation of inherence (*samavāya*) unifies two different things such as substance and attributes, substance and karma, substance and universal, a whole (substance) and the parts that constitute it, and an ultimate individuator (*viśeṣa*) with the ultimately indivisible entity to which it belongs. *Samavāya*, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas argue, is an eternal relation which renders the various categories into an inseparable whole (*ayutasiddha*), notwithstanding the differences that exist among them.

5. See, Vātsyāyana's commentary on the NS, 1.1.9.

6. NS, 1.1.9.

7. NS, 1.1.10.

8. A *guṇa*, often translated as 'quality', means that which is non-independent and non-primary (*apradhāna*). Thus, a *guṇa* can only reside in a substance, and not by itself. Universals, for example, 'horse-ness' can only exist in a substance, in this case, a particular horse, so a universal is like a *guṇa*. However, a *guṇa* is a particular, which may exemplify a universal. Thus the black colour of 'this black shirt' is a particular quality, but exemplifies the universal 'blackness'. Additionally, Vaiśeṣikas argue that a *guṇa* cannot possess another *guṇa*, with one exception, namely, number, which though a *guṇa* on the Vaiśeṣika theory, may be ascribed to a set of qualities (e.g., 'black' and 'red' are two colours).

9. NS, 1.1.10.

10. The *dravya*, that is, a 'thing' or a 'substance' is defined as the locus of qualities (*guṇas*) and actions (karmas), as well as the material cause ('inherent cause') of effects. It is that in which the effect inheres. Only a *dravya* can serve as the *samavāyi kāraṇa* or a material cause.

11. NS, 1.1.18; *Bhāṣya* and *Vārttikaṃ* on it.

12. NS, 1.1.11, defines body as the locus of three things: activity (*ceṣṭā*), sense organs (*indriya*) and object (*artha*). This definition needs some explanation. Vātsyāyana explains '*ceṣṭā*' as any activity that is intended to attain what is good and to avoid that which is harmful. Activity does not belong to non-living objects, say, a pitcher, it can only belong to the body of a finite soul (*jīva*). Similarly, the sense organs only belong to a body. Finally, the *sūtra* asserts that the body is the locus of the object (*artha*) of the senses. Here the term '*artha*' does not refer to the objects themselves, but to the pleasures and pains that the senses bring about. These pleasures and pains belong to the body.

13. The period from the sixth century or earlier saw the development of philosophical idealism, logical fatalism, and anti-religious ideas, generally known as materialism or Cārvāka, whose origins can be traced as far back as the *Ṛg Veda*.

No original writings of this school exist. The much later seventeenth-century *Tattvopaplavasiṃha* ('Lion assaulting all principles of reality') is the only extant work of this school. It is a polemical work directed against all the Vedic schools of Indian philosophy. Materialism is also known as *lokāyata*, that is, the doctrine that only this world exists: there is no world beyond it. See Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa's *Tattvopaplavasiṃha*, trans. S.N. Shastri and S.K. Saksena, eds, Sukhalalji Saghavi and Rasiklal C. Parikh, Gaekwad Oriental Series, 7 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1940).

14. NS. 3.2.35–6.

15. NS, 3.2.19.

16. NS, 1.1.15.

17. In order to do that, we need to say something like the following: a cognition has an intentional structure, form, or content, but no real structure. J.N. Mohanty, in his work *Reason and Tradition*, attempts to preserve the integrity of 'both the realist's and the idealist's positions, without having to decide between their metaphysical positions, i.e., realism and idealism. Instead of the word *ākāra*, which was rightly suspected by the realist as meaning a real form, we shall use the word *prakāra* (qualifier), picking up suggestions from the later Nyāya writings. We shall say, consciousness is *saprakāraka*, that is, it always has a qualifier, i.e. an intentional and logical structure, in spite of being formless (*nirākāra*) in the standard sense. This would explain why the Nyāya, while insisting on the contentless or formless character of a state of consciousness, nevertheless, proceeds to give elaborate logical analysis of it (and not merely of the sentence which expresses it), p. 40.

18. The aim of Nyāya theory is to demonstrate that error, like truth, has an objective referent. It is neither perception of non-existence (*asatkhyāti*) nor non-knowledge (*akhyāti*); it is just wrong perception. To explain the erroneous cognition of a silver, for example, the Naiyāyikas assume a relation of identity between the object before us and the remote silver. The silver cognized in an illusion is not unreal, because then it would not be perceived at all. The relation of inherence that exists between the silver and the silverness also is apprehended in the 'this' and 'silverness'. The silver perceived in a jewellery store sometime in the past is perceived through *jñāna lakṣaṇa sannikarṣa*, one of the extra-empirical contacts recognized by the Naiyāyikas. Thus the shell is mistaken for the silver. Falsity consists in associating silver with the shell where it does not exist. Neither of them is unreal. All knowledge claims, irrespective of whether true or false, are referential. It is only the false prediction of 'that' as 'what' (i.e., silver) which is corrected subsequently, but never the 'that' itself.

19. For the Nyāya analysis, see TSDNB, 221–32.

20. The Bhāṭṭas, in their theory of error, known as *viparita-khyāti*, argue that all knowledge is intrinsically valid and that the error is one of omission, not commission. In the erroneous judgement, 'this is silver', both the shell and the silver are separately real, though the relation between the two is not. The shell is misperceived as silver. Error consists in wrongly apprehending the shell as

silver, which in fact it is not. In error, on account of some defect in the causes of knowledge, two cognitions are welded together, and corrected by a subsequent sublating judgement. However, each of the cognitions is valid.

21. *Viṣayā*, the intentional object of thought, is different from the actual object (i.e., *vastu*). From an epistemological point of view, the object is neither true nor false. Rather, what is true or false is the act of judging in which we either affirm or deny the actuality of an object. This distinction is significant, because in illusion, say, shell–silver, the real object never appears, and what appears as the content is later cancelled by right knowledge. Thus, it is not the object per se, but rather the content, which is said to be true or false in knowledge.

In short, in knowledge the object is the content present in it. As long as one keeps in mind this distinction, no harm is done by using object and content interchangeably, as I have done.

22. For the Naiyāyikas, perception is cognition that arises from the contact of a sense organ with an object, is not itself linguistic, is not erroneous, and is well ascertained (*indriyārthasannikarṣotpannaṃ jñānaṃ avyapadeśyaṃ avybhicāri vyavasāyātmakaṃ pratyakṣaṃ*), NS. 1.1.4. The self, the mind, sense organs, objects, and particular kinds of contact between them are necessary conditions for perception. In other words, unless the self is in contact with the *manas*, *manas* with the sense organs, and the sense organs with the object, no perception can arise. All knowledge is revelation of objects, and the contact of the senses with an object is not metaphorical but literal.

The Naiyāyikas articulate the definition of perception in terms of sense–object contact. This implies that perception as a form of valid knowledge originates and is caused by sense stimulation. This definition follows the etymological meaning of the term '*pratyakṣa*', which means 'present before eyes or any other sense organs', signifying direct or immediate knowledge. In short, perception is a cognition that is always of an object. The cognition of substances like tables and chairs is known as an external perception; of pleasure and pain as internal perceptions. Gautama further adds that perception is *avyapadeśya* (not impregnated by words) and *vyavasāyātmaka* (definite).

23. Udayanācārya, *Tātparya Pariśuddhi*, quoted in J.N. Mohanty's *Gaṅgeśa Theory of Truth* (Shantiniketan: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, 1966), p. 54.

Whether *anuvyavasāya* is intrinsically true is debatable. However, we cannot deny that it does not err and, accordingly, is beyond any doubt: 'The fact that one never introspects "I know a jar" when in fact one is knowing a cloth is sufficient to show that here there is no reasonable probability of doubt. Even if the primary knowledge were erroneous, its *anuvyavasāya* is not, for it accurately describes its object, which is the primary knowledge. The knowledge "this is silver" may be false, but that the knowledge has "silverness" for its qualifier is true.' Ibid., p. 230.

24. For a detailed analysis of this concept, see this author's *The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedānta Phenomenology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998).

25. The most detailed and systematic treatment of how the witness-consciousness is apprehended is found in Jñānaghanapāda's *Tattvaśuddhi*, eds S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri and E.P. Radhakrishnan (Madras: University of Madras, 1941), p. 219.

26. 'As to ontology,' notes Junjiro Takakusu, 'this school ... adheres neither to the doctrine that all things exist, because it takes the view that nothing outside the mind (mental activity) exists, nor to the doctrine that nothing exists, because it asserts that ideations do exist.' *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), p. 81.

27. Rāmānuja is said to be the founder of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school, one rival of Advaita Vedānta. The Viśiṣṭādvaita originated with the commentary of Rāmānuja on *Brahmasūtras*, in which he joins issue with the Advaitins over the question of the nature of consciousness and the viability of recognizing a veil for consciousness. The label 'Viśiṣṭadvaita' used to refer to this school means 'qualified (as theistic) nondualism.

28. '*vartamānadaśāyām svasattaiva svāśrayaṃ prati prakāśamānaṃ.*' Rāmānuja's commentary on *Brahmasūtras*, 1.1.1.

29. '*Bādha*' etymologically means 'contradiction' or 'cancellation'. It is a mental process in which one disvalues a content of consciousness, say, X, and in the light of new information, replaces it by Y. It contains within its fold both axiological and epistemic dimensions. The process of sublation involves three steps: initially, a judgement about some object or content of consciousness; the initial judgement is recognized as defective in the light of a new judgement that is incompatible with the first judgement; and finally the new judgement is accepted as true.

30. It is important to note here that the term 'level' in this context does not have any spatial connotations. These levels differ because reason cannot establish any causal relation among them. Eliot Deutsch brings out the ontological, epistemological, and logical characteristics pertaining to a level of being: 'The term "the level" seems to function in discourse primarily as a spatial metaphor: in common language it connotes "aboves" and "belows"—one forms an image of "levels" by thinking of one thing as being above or below another thing or of one thing as being "deeper" then another thing, as in the expression "level of meaning". The term "level", however, for purposes of ontology, can be given a more precise conceptual meaning. Two orders of being can be said to be on different levels: (1) when, epistemologically, because of differences in kind between them (temporal, qualitative, and so on), relations cannot be established rationally between them; (2) when, logically, assertions made about one of the orders from the standpoint of the other may legitimately violate the formal requirements that govern the thought of the one order when confined to itself (for example, assertions about the Godhead or Absolute in religious literature

made from the empirical standpoint may legitimately violate—and they frequently do—the law of contradiction); and (3) when, axiologically, different grades of value are ascribed to the orders.' Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1968), pp. 25–6.

31. Sāṃkara notes: 'Or else let the qualities, etc., depend on substance; then it follows that, as they are present where substance is present, and absent where it is absent, substance only exists, and, according to its various forms, becomes the object of different forms and conceptions (such as quality, action, etc.); just as Devadatta, for instance, according to the conditions in which he finds himself, is the object of various conceptions and names.' *The Vedānta-Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa with the Commentary by Śaṃkara* (trans.), George Thibaut (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), part I, 2.1.17, p. 395.

32. See 'Introduction' to J.N. Mohanty's *Gaṅgeśa Theory of Truth*, and Appendix I of his *Classical Indian Philosophy* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

33. The commentator once again is refuting the Nyāya theory that a cognition does not manifest either itself or the subject. The Advaitins affirm that the Nyāya position that a cognition, while itself unperceived—like the eyes, etc.—establishes its own objects—such as desire, etc.—leads to infinite regress. Such a verdict goes against our experience, which functions temporally (Jñānaghanapāda's *Tattvaśuddhi*, p. 219).

4

The Subjectivist–Objectivist Theory of Yogācāra Buddhism

Buddhism, as we understand it today, is a generic term for various religious, philosophical, epistemological, and ethical doctrines associated with the teachings of the Buddha. It contains within its fold a variety of schools, for example, Therāvāda, Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra, Mādhyamika, along with several reformulations of these original Indian doctrines in the Tibetan and the Chinese canons, and Zen Buddhism with its original Chinese and Japanese versions.

The primary goal of this chapter is to unpack, develop, and evaluate the Buddhist theory of consciousness. I am going to provide this account from the Yogācāra (fourth century CE) perspective. Given that the Yogācāra school takes consciousness to be the only reality and while retaining the account of consciousness found in early Buddhism (Sautrāntikas and Vaibhāṣikas), develops a detailed and sophisticated theory of consciousness, it is natural to turn to this school for the Buddhist account of consciousness.

Yogācāra, an Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist school, is so named because it accepts the 'practice of yoga' as the primary means of religious attainment. Notwithstanding its name, the primary emphases of this school are philosophical and psychological. The Buddhist tradition venerates Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the two brothers, as the co-founders, of this school. The school not only draws from the writings of Asaṅga (for example, *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and the *Abhidharma-samuccaya*) and Vasubandhu (for example, *Viṃśatikā* or the *Twenty Verses* and *Triṃśikā* or the *Thirty Verses*), but also makes use of a number of such Mahāyāna texts as the *Saṃdhinirmocana-Sūtra*, *Laṅkāvatārā-Sūtra*, *Madhyanta-Vibhāga*, and many other texts that emphasize the doctrine of the phenomenal reality as a manifestation of consciousness. In addition to their basic doctrine of 'consciousness only' (*vijñatimātra*),

the school offers a new theory of eight consciousnesses, adding *manonāma-vijñāna* or 'consciousness called mind' and *ālaya-vijñāna* or 'warehouse consciousness' to the six traditional consciousnesses of earlier Buddhism. Thus it is not surprising that at times the school is referred to as Vijñānavāda (the upholders of the doctrine of consciousness). While affirming the traditional Mahāyāna notion of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), it replaces the two-level theory of truth of Mādhyamika with three 'natures' or 'realms': (1) *parikalpita*, an imagined or mentally constructed level which appears to be real; (2) *paratantra*, a relative reality, the empirical realm or the realm of causality which accounts for our mistaking impermanence for permanence; and (3) *parinispanna*, the ultimate reality or the ultimate truth of all events, the true nature of things (*dharmatā*). In the Buddhist language, the last 'nature' or 'realm' is 'suchness' or 'thatness', i.e., a nature which cannot be articulated conceptually and linguistically; it is not a universal shared by many particulars; it is uniquely each event's own nature. It is nirvāṇa. Repeated meditative practices remove past residual impressions and purify all defilements and conceptual constructions; one is enlightened. This school also develops the notion of the 'three bodies of the Buddha'. In short, in developing all these notions, this school exerted a major formative influence on a number of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist schools.

This chapter will proceed in three parts: in the first, I provide a discussion of the early Buddhist theory of consciousness; in the second, I provide an account of the Yogācāra conception of consciousness focusing on Vasubandhu's *Twenty Verses* which contain his arguments against the existence of external world independent of our perception of it, as well as the *Thirty Verses* in which he develops his account of consciousness in detail; and in the third and the final part, I shall analyse the ramifications of the Yogācāra conception of consciousness in the context of the other schools of Indian philosophy. Wherever necessary, I shall utilize other Yogācāra texts to come to grips with the basic issues that revolve around the Buddhist conception of consciousness. It is my hope that the concluding section of this chapter will not only help my readers correctly understand the basic issues involved herein, but also set the stage for the discussion to follow in the remaining chapters.

I

Early Buddhist Account of Consciousness

Consciousness (*vijñāna*) appears in early Buddhism as the third link in the process of dependent arising (*pratītya-samutapāda*). It is also listed as one of the five *skandhas* (aggregates) that create the false notion of 'I' or an ego. Given that the doctrine of dependent arising is so central to a clear understanding of the Buddhist thought, I shall begin my analysis with it.

The Buddha uses the doctrine of dependent arising to explain the nature of human existence and predicament. Essentially a doctrine of causality, it encompasses within its fold a set of such interrelated notions as moral responsibility, freedom, nature of psycho-physical personality, sense experience, craving, rebirth, death, and so on. Etymologically, *samutapāda* means 'arising in combination', better yet 'co-arising'. However, when compounded with the term '*pratītya*' meaning 'moving' or 'leaning', the term implies 'dependence'. And so, the term '*pratītya-samutapāda*' has generally been translated as 'dependent arising'. In the Buddhist texts, the formula of dependent arising has often been expressed as follows: 'When this is, that comes to be; on the arising of that, this arises. When this is not, that is not; on the cessation of that, this ceases.'[1] The Buddha explains the existence of human personality, continuity of life, and its cessation in a formula of dependent arising consisting of twelve factors.

The Buddha explains this doctrine in the *Discourse to Kātyāyana* in the context of explaining the doctrine of the Middle Way in which he advises Kātyāyana to avoid both extremes of existence and non-existence and asks him to follow the Middle Way. In his words:

> On ignorance depends karma;
> On karma depends consciousness;
> On consciousness depend name and form;
> On name and form depend the six organs of sense;
> On the six organs of sense depends contact;
> On contact depends sensation;
> On sensation depends desire;
> On desire depends attachment;
> On attachment depends existence;
> On existence depends birth;
> On birth depend old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair. Thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise.

> But on the complete fading out and cessation of ignorance ceases karma;
> On the cessation of karma ceases consciousness ...
> On the cessation of existence ceases birth;
> On the cessation of birth cease old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair. Thus does this entire aggregation of misery cease.[2]

The Buddha uses this doctrine of dependent arising to explain not only the process of human bondage but also that of freedom. In the twelve-factored causal law of dependent arising outlined above, consciousness (*vijñāna*) is the third in the list; it is preceded by 'ignorance' or 'nescience' (*avidyā*) and 'mental formations' or dispositions (karma) and followed by name and form (*nāma-rūpa*), the fourth link. It is important to note here that consciousness provides the link between the past and the present. The beginning statement 'on ignorance depends karma' provides an explanation of human bondage. The 'name and form' refers to psycho-physical personality, the human person in bondage, whose nature is conditioned by his/her consciousness (*vijñāna*), which, in turn, is conditioned by his/her ignorance or lack of understanding. Conditioned by ignorance and dispositions, a person experiences the empirical world surrounding him through the sense organs, becomes attached to them, craves for them, thereby creating a desire in him to be born again and again.

It is important to remember in this context that each of the twelve factors is both conditioned and that which conditions. Thus the form of one's consciousness is conditioned not only by what one experiences in this world but also by the way in which one responds to these experiences. If a person realizes that pleasurable experiences are temporary thereby leading him to control his cravings, etc., he will have a better understanding of his own personality and the world that surrounds him. On the other hand, if his actions are dominated by cravings and clinging to pleasurable experiences, they will create in him a desire to be, in this as well as future lives, thereby giving rise to another collection of name and form. Thus with the help of the formula of dependent arising, the Buddha provides an explanation of the nature of *saṃsāra*, as well as of the consciousness of 'I'.

The 'I' or the human personality, argues the Buddha, consists of five aggregates. These are the aggregates of matter, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Consciousness, the Buddha points out, is a response based on six faculties, namely, the eyes, ears,

nose, tongue, body, and the *manas* or the mind.[3] Each of the six consciousnesses has a corresponding object structure (visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible things, and idea or thought). For example, the basis of the visual consciousness is the eye and any visible form is its object. The bases of sound consciousness are the ears and any audible sound the object. So is the case with the remaining types of consciousness. In the Buddha's words:

> O priests, consciousness is named from that in dependence on which it comes into being. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of forms in dependence on the eye is called eye-consciousness. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of sounds in dependence on the ear is called ear-consciousness. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of odours in dependence on the nose is called nose-consciousness. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of tastes in dependence on the tongue is called tongue-consciousness. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of things tangible in dependence on the body is called body-consciousness. The consciousness which comes into being in respect of ideas in dependence on the mind is called mind-consciousness.[4]

Consciousness (*vijñāna*), in this context, is simply an awareness of the presence of an object.[5] For example, when the eye comes into contact with the colour red, visual consciousness arises as a reaction, without any attendant recognition of redness. In other words, this consciousness is simply an awareness of the presence of a colour. 'Visual consciousness' signifies 'seeing', not recognition. The job of recognition is performed by the third *skandha*, namely, perception (*saññā*). Before proceeding further, it is important to underscore one important point: consciousness for the Buddha is not spirit as opposed to matter; unlike Hinduism, it does not denote a soul or substantial self that abides through series of births. Consciousness, says the Buddha, arises depending on certain conditions, and ceases when the conditions cease to be:

> Just as, O priests, fire is named from that in dependence on which it burns. The fire which burns in dependence on logs of wood is called a log-fire. The fire which burns in dependence on chips is called a chip-fire. The fire which burns in dependence on grass is called a grass-fire. In exactly the same way, O priests, consciousness is named from that in dependence on which it comes into being.[6]

Thus, the Buddha repeatedly affirms that consciousness arises depending on certain conditions, and that there is no arising of it in the absence of those conditions. He declares in unequivocal terms that consciousness depends on the four *skandhas*:

> All sensation whatsoever, ... all perception whatsoever, ... all predispositions whatsoever, ... all consciousness whatsoever, past, future, or present, be it subjective or existing outside, gross or subtle, mean or exalted, far or near, which is coupled with depravity and attachment, belongs to the consciousness-attachment group.[7]

The point that the Buddha is trying to make is as follows: consciousness depends on the remaining four *skandhas*, namely, matter, sensation, perception, and mental formations, and cannot exist independently of them. Human personality is nothing but a name given to the collection of these five ever-changing, physical and mental aggregates. Being impermanent, these aggregates change from one moment to the next. There is no identity, simply a continuity of becoming, and a flux of momentary arising and ceasing to be. One must not lose sight of the fact that consciousness does not owe its origin to an eternal being or soul, but rather has its origin in experience that is characterized by cause and effect.

This early conception of consciousness is discussed by the Buddhist schools of all colours and persuasions. Eventually, the five aggregates (*skandhas*) came to be divided into numerous constituent elements called *dharmas*[8] and the various kinds of conceptions (*vijñapti*) were taken to be the constituent elements of the aggregates of consciousness. The number of constituent elements assigned to the aggregate of consciousness varied from school to school. However, they agreed that a person is a cluster of these impermanent *dharmas*; they involve grasping and attachment, the key causes of suffering. The most systematic, detailed, and sophisticated analysis of *dharmas* is found in the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu.

II

Yogācāra Conception of Consciousness

Vasubandhu,[9] the younger brother of Asaṅga, was born in Puruṣapura (today known as Peshawar) in the state of Gāndhāra in north-western India during the times when Gāndhāra was dominated by the Vaibhāṣika (also called Sarvāstivāda) school of Buddhism. Thus it is not surprising that this school influenced Vasubandhu's early writings. For a long time, Vasubandhu supported himself by delivering public lectures on Buddhism. He lectured during the day and condensed that day's lecture

in a verse in the evening. In time, he composed over 600 verses. He collected these verses under the title *Abhidharmakośa*, which became one of the most important books of the Buddhist tradition. He also wrote a commentary on this work. In this work, he describes the views of the different schools of the early Buddhist philosophy along with his own position. Vasubandhu arranges and systematizes all the dharmas recognized in the early Buddhist philosophy and enumerates seventy-five dharmas.[10]

Although Vasubandhu began as a Sarvāstivādin, he converted to Mahāyāna Buddhism under the influence of his brother Asaṅga. Vasubandhu's two important works of this phase are *Viṃśatikā* or the *Twenty Verses* with his own commentary, and *Triṃśikā* or the *Thirty Verses*. As a Yogācārin, Vasubandhu denied the existence of the external world; in the *Twenty Verses* he defends Yogācāra against the objections by the realists who believe in the existence of an external world, and in the *Thirty Verses* he develops his theses of the nature and transformations of consciousness.

The goal of *Viṃśatikā* is to repudiate the view that there is an external world corresponding to the images of objects. It argues that a specific change occurring in the stream of successive moments (*saṃtati*) of consciousness creates the image of an object. At the outset of this work, Vasubandhu declares that consciousness alone is real and that the objects perceived in the alleged external world are non-existent. In the very first verse, he writes: 'Everything is consciousness only, because there is the appearance of the non-existent objects, just as a person with a cataract sees hairs, moons, which do not really exist.'[11] In the second verse he anticipates the following objection on behalf of the opponent who argues for the existence of the external world. The opponent argues: if we assume for the sake of argument that external objects do not exist, how would we account for their spatial and temporal determinations (*deśa* and *kāla niyamas*), the indetermination of the various perceiving streams of consciousness (*saṃtānasyāniyāniyamaś*) and the fruitful activity which results from their knowledge (*kṛtya-kriya*)?[12] The questions that the opponent is trying to raise are as follows: if cognitions arise without there being any external sense objects, how is it that an object is only seen at a particular place and at a particular time? Why is it that all persons, and not only one person, present at a particular place and time, perceive a particular object? And how is it that fruitful activity is possible? If things such as food, water, poison, etc., seen in a dream are mental constructions devoid of activity, does it not imply that the real food and real water also

cannot satisfy hunger and thirst respectively? Since there is a correspondence between one's experience and the external objects, argues the opponent, external objects must exist.

Cognitions, argues Vasubandhu, arise without depending on the putative object. In response to the objection that in the absence of external objects we shall not be able to account for the spatio-temporal determinations of cognitions, that is, if there are no real objects corresponding to the ideas of objects, objects would arise anywhere at any time, like in a dream. Vasubandhu argues that external objects are perceived in dreams and hallucinations, although none is actually present. Even in dreams, one perceives such things as a city, a garden, a woman, a man, etc. These things are seen in a particular place and at a particular time, but not in all places and at all times. Thus, dreams are as determinate as waking experiences. In short, the spatio-temporal determinations in dreams and waking experiences are alike. The roaring of a tiger in a dream may cause real fear to disturb one's sleep; similarly, an erotic dream may result in a man's discharging his semen. Additionally, those persons who because of their bad deeds go to hell, see the same river of pus, etc. In short, in dreams and in hell, the four factors outlined by the opponent obtain, though there are no external objects. Accordingly, Vasubandhu points out that on the basis of certain experiences resulting in certain experiences, one cannot conclude that objects corresponding to those experiences in fact exist.

Conversely, he argues that perceptions do not justify the existence of external objects. He defines perception as an awareness that arises from the very object by which that awareness is specified. It is indeed true that awareness of X, if veridical, is caused by X; but X, in this context, is not a putative external object but rather the percept or object form which 'floats' in that very awareness, which Vasubandhu calls the *ālambana pratyaya*. The mind fabricates its own objects. Residual impressions generated by past experiences in turn generate ideas in the mind and these ideas are called 'objects'.

How we see is, to a large extent, determined by previous experience and our experiences are intersubjective. To the question how an intersubjective world is possible in the absence of external objects, Vasubandhu refers to the illusory experience of hell shared by persons with a common karmic heritage. When two individuals, say, A and B, are looking at the same house from their living room window, their experiences are very similar, if not same, because they both share the 'same' karma that has matured. In reality, there are two house-contents:

the house that A perceives and the house that B perceives; there is no external house which exists independently of its being perceived.

To sum up, the points that Vasubandhu is trying to make are as follows: there is no one-to-one correspondence between images and the external objects and given that no experience can occur without consciousness, consciousness is the basic presupposition of any experience. Forms of subjectivity as well as objectivity are manifestations of the same consciousness; neither is there any personal ego or any external object.[13]

Other followers of Yogācāra, for example, Dignāga, make use of the doctrine of momentariness to argue against the independent existence of objects apart from their being perceived. Dignāga argues that since objects are momentary, that is, durationless instantaneous events, they cannot be the cause of consciousness, because in order for them to function as the cause of consciousness, there must be a time lapse between the arising of an object and our consciousness of it. However, such a time lapse is not possible, because an object being durationless, does not, cannot, be causally efficacious. Additionally, both the object and the consciousness are experienced simultaneously; an object and its consciousness are one and the same. Accordingly, Dignāga argues that external objects cannot be taken to be the cause of consciousness;[14] on the contrary, given the simultaneity of the two, the external object is nothing but consciousness itself. Dignāga notes: 'The object of cognition is the object internally cognized by introspection and appearing to us as though it were external. The ultimate reality is thus the "idea" [consciousness].'[15] He further adds: 'There is no difference between the patch of blue and the sensation of blue. The same idea can be recognized as a cognized object and a process of cognition.'[16] So Dignāga concludes that it is impossible to demonstrate the independent existence of objects apart from our perceptions of them. No object is ever experienced apart from the consciousness; consciousness and the object are identical.

The important features[17] of the Yogācāra conception of the existence of an external world may be formulated as follows:

1. No proof of the external world is possible.
2. The external world, even if it did exist, could not cause our ideas; being momentary, the former would cease to be when the latter arises.
3. The knowledge determines the form of the object.

4. We are conscious of ideas and things together and never separately. Thus, consciousness and content are simultaneous—they are always experienced together (*sahopalambha*), that is, one is never experienced without the other.
5. When we are speaking of outer objects, we are only using words.
6. The actual variety and order of ideas could be explained by the *saṃskāras* or residual impressions of past ideas; there is no need to assume a plurality of objects.
7. The similarity between the consciousness in our waking life and dream consciousness confirms that the external world is not real. In dreams and mirages, external objects appear though none is actually present. Similarly, our consciousnesses in waking life are simply ideas and these ideas themselves appear as external objects.
8. Our consciousness develops the entire world of experience by its two functions: perception (*khyāti*) and imagination or conceptual construction (*vikalpa*).

Hence the conclusion: the external objects, which are generally taken to possess objective reality, are nothing but states of consciousness. All this amounts to arguing that the alleged external objects depend on consciousness both epistemologically and ontologically; nothing is real except consciousness; it is self-sufficient.

Consciousness, argues Vasubandhu, consists of a series of momentary events, giving rise to the awareness of various objects of the senses and the mind. In the very first verse of his important work *Triṃśikā*, Vasubandhu emphatically declares that all constituent elements and the entity called self (ātman) are transformations of consciousness. Consciousness undergoes triple transformations. The usages of the terms 'ātman' and 'dharma' are manifold, but both terms just refer to the transformations of consciousness (*vijñāna-pariṇāma*). This transformation is threefold, namely, fruition, thinking, and representations of objects.[18] The first, which is also known as the warehouse-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*), is the fruition (*vipāka*) of all seeds; the essential nature of the second, the *manonāma-vijñāna*, is to think; and the third transformation represents the six sense-based consciousnesses (pravrtii-vijñāna).

The term '*ālaya-vijñāna*' etymologically means 'receptacle consciousness'. The earliest use of this term is found in the

Saṃdhinirmocana-Sūtra, a Yogācāra work that pre-dates both Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. The fifth chapter of this work elucidates *ālaya-vijñāna* as the consciousness which possesses 'all the seeds' from which future experiential forms grow. It is often compared to the ocean whose surface water is disturbed by the winds, giving rise to constantly changing waves.[19] Asaṅga regards *ālaya-vijñāna* as a *dhātu*,[20] without any beginnings, which functions as the common ground of all dharmas.[21]

Vasubandhu holds that the *ālaya-vijñāna* is the repository of all seeds. Seeds are potentialities, habitualities which are sedimented in the life of an ego. When a person performs actions, *vāsanās*(habitual residual traces) of these actions are left in the form of seeds in the unconscious and *ālaya-vijñāna*, a warehouse-consciousness, stores them. Thus, the *ālaya-vijñāna* is the realm of potentiality; it is the root consciousness. The accumulated karmic traces lie dormant in the *ālaya-vijñāna*.

In itself, the *ālaya-vijñāna* is not a static entity; it changes instantaneously. *The Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra*, for example, notes:

> As the waves are stirred by the ocean, as images are seen in a mirror, in a dream, simultaneously, so is the mind its own field.[22]
>
> Like the waves which rise on the ocean stirred by the wind, dancing and without interruption, the *ālaya*-ocean is, in a similar manner, constantly stirred by the winds of objectivity, and so is seen dancing about with the various *vijñāna* waves ... . As the waves in their variety are constantly stirred in the ocean, so in the *ālaya* is produced the variety of what is known as the *vijñānas*.[23]

Vasubandhu explains the concept further:

> The store consciousness is the perception, abiding in, and grasping of what is unperceived (*asaṃviditaka*). It is always associated with touch, attentiveness, knowledge, conception and willing.[24]
>
> The feeling that pertains to it is that of indifference. The store consciousness is undefiled and undefined. Touch, etc., are also indifferent in feeling. The store consciousness is constantly evolving like a torrent of water.[25]

It is important to note that the wind of activity, with which the *ālaya-vijñāna* is often compared, is not something external to it. The warehouse-consciousness carries within it the traces of all past experiences: of clinging and grasping of what is unperceived, and it is also associated with such experiential phenomena as conception, touch, knowledge, volition, and feeling. These experiences are neither pleasant

nor unpleasant; they are indifferent. It is not observed by anybody and given that it can be defined as neither good nor bad, the best way to describe it is by saying that it is undefined, possibly inexpressible. In it the seeds of *vāsanās* that have attained maturity germinate. It is the ground of experience out of which the individual consciousness grows. These seeds, however, continue to create agitation within the *ālaya* and manifest under suitable conditions. Accordingly, the *ālaya-vijñāna* is both the '*hetu-parināma-vijñāna*' and the '*phala-parināma-vijñāna*', that is, the causally transformed consciousness and the effect of such transformed consciousness.

> Due to the habit-energy (*vāsanās*) of actions and the twofold grasping as soon as the previous maturation has been exhausted another maturation arises.[26]

The *ālaya-vijñāna*, the individual unconscious, continues from birth to birth. It serves as the basis of both, unconscious[27] and conscious. When once the past seeds stored in it manifest themselves, no *ālaya-vijñāna* remains. Ending of an individual *ālaya-vijñāna* may either mean the end of one's present life or the attainment of enlightenment contingent upon how the individual *ālaya-vijñāna* has been exhausted. If, however, an individual does not attain nirvāṇa, the traces of the deeds will create a new *ālaya-vijñāna*, and keep one involved in phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*).

Thus, the *ālaya-vijñāna* is a sort of a warehouse for traces of past experiences, capable of being awakened or activated under suitable conditions, and determining the cause and nature of one's experience. The Yogācāra account, however, does not provide a clear explanation of what those suitable or appropriate conditions might be under which these traces become manifest. It simply says that the *ālaya-vijñāna* stores these seeds until they ripen and manifest themselves in a process referred to as 'perfuming' (*vāsanā*). One's actions, experiences, behaviour, etc., are conditioned by these seeds and traces—the past history—which constitute the individuality, the feeling of me, mine, and my cognitive states. It seems that these seeds or the traces of past experiences, are perfumed by each perishing cognition of the flux of consciousness, as well as produce a cognition in the future (while each such cognition also perfumes the seed). Thus, the *ālaya-vijñāna*, as the root consciousness, is the basis of the remaining seven types of consciousness.

The second transformation of consciousness is *mano-vijñāna*, the 'consciousness called mind'.

The second transformation of consciousness, called the *mano-vijñāna*, evolves when it takes the store consciousness as an object and support. The essential nature of the *mano-vijñāna* is to think.[28]

Vasubandhu construes it as a 'thinking consciousness'. Sthiramati, in his commentary on this verse, refers to it as the 'defiled consciousness'. It depends on the *ālaya-vijñāna* for its origin and operation. *Ālaya-vijñāna* also serves as its object, because as a thinking consciousness, it mistakes the *ālaya-vijñāna* to be the self,[29] thereby creating the false notion of an ego. It is the I-consciousness or the consciousness of an ego. It is taken to be associated with four types of defilements: perception of self (*ātma-dṛṣṭi*), confusion about the self (*ātma-moha*), self-pride (*ātma-māna*), and self-love (*ātma-sneha*).[30] It does not exist in an *arhat* nor functions in the state of cessation nor on the supermundane path.[31] Thus, whereas *ālaya-vijñāna* is latent, the thinking consciousness is a manifest consciousness and is responsible for making discriminations and value judgements because of its misperception of the *ālaya-vijñāna*.

The third transformation of consciousness is called *pravṛtti-vijñāna* or the active consciousness. It consists of six sense-based consciousnesses. They are produced through the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, and the mind senses:

The five sense consciousnesses arise in the store consciousness ... depending on causes and conditions, just as waves originate on water.

The *mano-vijñāna* arises at all times, except in the case of those who are born in the realm of beings without thought (*asaṃjñika*), those who are in the two mindless trances (*samāpatti*), or those who are in states of stupor or unconsciousness (*acittaka*).[32]

Thus, whereas the five sense-based consciousnesses arise depending on causes and conditions either individually or collectively, just as waves originate on water from the *ālaya-vijñāna*, *mano-vijñāna*, on the other hand, functions at all times except in those who are *asaṃjñika*, those who are in the two mindless trances, or those who are in states of unconsciousness.

We have already seen that in early Buddhism the aggregate of consciousness was taken to be of six kinds. Each type of consciousness has a specific sense organ attached to it. Early Buddhists take mind (*manas*) to be a faculty like any other sense organ, say, the eyes or the ears, which can be restrained and developed like any other faculty. The

sensory forms, sounds, odours and tastes, and tangible objects that we experience in the world generate ideas and thoughts which are conceived by the *manas*-consciousness. Given that the *manas*-consciousness arises as a result of the ideas and thoughts produced and conditioned by our experiences, it has thoughts or ideas as its object. It is important to note in this context that the *manas*-consciousness, one of the six kinds of sense consciousnesses accepted by early Buddhism, is different from the *mano-vijñāna*, that is, thinking consciousness of Vasubandhu. The *mano-vijñāna* owes its origin to the warehouse-consciousness, which not only constitutes the object of *mano-vijñāna*, but also the basis of its operation and function. *Manas*, a subtle mental element, functions by receiving and disposing the data received from the other consciousnesses. The *mano-vijñāna* performs the function of organizing the data presented to it by the six sorts of sense consciousness; it also mistakenly takes the warehouse-consciousness to be an object, and misconstrues it as an independent self. Thus, 'whereas *mano-vijñāna* divides the world into a web of objects, *manas* polarizes this world around a false-discriminated ego or self. *Manas* develops attachments and aversions to the "things" which the *mano-vijñāna* isolates.'[33]

While the *ālaya-vijñāna* is latent, the thinking consciousness and the six sense-based consciousnesses are manifest. There exists a reciprocal dependence between the *ālaya-vijñāna* and the seven manifest conscious-nesses. The latter is produced from the seeds stored in the former, and, in turn, leaves its impressions on the former. The process of evolution takes place as follows: seeds ripen in the warehouse-consciousness resulting in the evolution first of the thinking consciousness and then the sixfold consciousnesses, thereby leading to good, bad, or indifferent behaviour. As a result the *vāsanās* are accumulated and stored in the warehouse-consciousness and serve as the basis for continuous or cyclic evolution of the thinking consciousness and the sixfold sense-based consciousness.[34]

The *ālaya-vijñāna* changes from moment to moment; *vijñāna* of one moment is replaced by the *vijñāna* of the next moment. As a result, there is a stream of successive moments of consciousness resulting in the formation of a consciousness complex. Self is nothing but a complex of this stream of consciousness, and the objects that are taken to exist in the external world are simply the images that appear in the stream of consciousness. The evolution or transformation of consciousness is without any beginning. It continues to flow until the stored seeds are rooted out and one attains enlightenment.

By making *ālaya-vijñāna* the receptacle of all seven types of consciousnesses, Yogācāra is able to account for such mental activities as memory. Though the majority of seeds that ripen and manifest themselves are 'tainted' (*āśravā-bīja*), giving rise to all sorts of wrong perceptions, the *ālaya-vijñāna* also contains a number of pure seeds (*anāśrava-bīja*) that lie in the deepest layer of the *ālaya* (*paramālaya*). It is the maturing of these pure seeds that is responsible for a complete restructuring of experience, known as 'a turning over of one's basis' (*āśraya-pravṛtti*) through meditation. This explains not only how the *ālaya-vijñāna* functions, but also why it is sometimes referred to as the *Tathāgata-garbha* or the 'womb of the *Tathāgata*'.

Of these eight kinds of consciousness, the last seven are oriented towards the object. They create the mistaken belief that there are such objects, as trees, tables, chairs, etc., and these objects exist independently of consciousness. They are intentional. The first, the *ālaya-vijñāna*, on the other hand, is non-intentional. It is the unconscious foundation of all intentional cognitions; it is also the streaming flux of consciousness, without any reflections and conceptualizations, though unified by past habitualities and their traces by a sort of 'passive synthesis'. So for Yogācāra, the seven intentional cognitions are founded upon a non-intentional flux of consciousness. Consciousness in contemporary phenomenology—even when it is intentional—is founded upon a hyletic, sensuous consciousness. It is always concrete; it is neither the purely formal thought of Kant nor the pure, intellectual thinking act of Hegel. So far Yogācāra comes close to phenomenology, excepting its thesis of non-intentional *ālaya* as the foundation of intentional consciousness.

III

Concluding Reflections

On the basis of the analysis given above, the main features of the Yogācāra theory of consciousness may be formulated as follows:

1. A *vijñāna* (consciousness) is an event that arises and perishes.
2. It arises on the basis of four causal conditions (*pratyaya*).
3. Each *vijñāna* has an intentional structure internal to it.
4. It is also aware of itself (*svasaṃvedana*).

5. Each *vijñāna* as it perishes leaves its traces, which are preserved in another *vijñāna* known as the *ālaya-vijñāna*.
6. All types of consciousness have a hyletic or sensuous aspect; the only exceptions in this regard are the *manonāma-vijñāna* and *ālaya-vijñāna*, the two new modes of consciousness which Yogācāra added to the already available list of six.

A quick review of the features outlined above reveals that the entire theory of Yogācāra has features which are naturalistic, intentionalistic and spiritualistic. The naturalistic elements are an emphasis on causality; they talk of the arising and perishing of every *vijñapti*, and the sensuous or hyletic nature of every consciousness excepting the thinking consciousness and the *ālaya-vijñāna*. The intentionalistic element is preserved in the thesis that every *vijñapti*, excepting *ālaya*, has in its terminology the structure of '*citta*' and '*caitta*'[35]—act and content. It may be noted at this point that the Yogācāra needs such an intentional structure within each *vijñāna* in order to be able to do away with the alleged external things. The spiritual element is preserved in the thesis of *svasaṃvedana*, which states that every consciousness is self-manifesting. I shall next elaborate on these points. To do so, I shall begin with an analysis of the four causal conditions that bring about consciousness.

The technical Buddhist word for a cause is '*pratyaya*'. A *vijñāna* arises depending on four causal conditions (*pratyaya*s). The *Abhidharmakośa* lists them as four: '... There are four conditions (*pratyayas*), namely, cause as a condition (*hetupratyaya*), an equal and immediately antecedent condition (*samanantarpatyaya*), an object as condition (*ālambanapatyaya*), and a predominating influence as condition (*adhipatipatyayat*).'[36]

Hetu pratyaya: *Hetu pratyaya* or the primary causal condition has been defined as that by means of which an effect comes into existence. In other words, it is the cause in the ordinary sense of a 'cause'. It is also explained as a supportive factor (*upakārako dhammo*); it is that by which an effect is established. It is used in the sense of root. The roots of a tree are the *hetu*; the water and the sun that help its growth are the conditions. In the *Abhidharma*, these two terms are used in different senses. However, in the *Sūtras*, they have been used interchangeably in the sense of 'the causal relation by way of root'.[37] The motives of actions, for example, hatred, desire, confusion, may be taken to be the root condition of human suffering.

Ālambana pratyaya: The term '*ālambana*' is derived from *ā* + √*lamb*, meaning to hang upon. It implies things which the subject hangs upon, that is, the 'objects'. In other words, it is the objective condition which signifies the objective support for the manifestation of consciousness or mental phenomena. A visual form, for instance, serves as a causal relation to visual consciousness by way of an 'object'.

Adhipati pratyaya: Literally, it stands for mastery or lordship over one's own. It is the dominant condition. One of the four dominant factors, namely, wish, thought, effort, and reasoning at any given time may causally relate itself to such phenomena as consciousness and mental states by way of predominance. 'Whenever such phenomena as consciousness and mental states arise by giving predominance to one of these four factors, then this phenomenon is to the other phenomenon a condition by way of predominance.'[38]

Samanantara pratyaya: The Buddhists argue that one thought-moment perishes immediately after giving birth to another. All the potentialities of the preceding state are transferred to the succeeding state. Thus the perishing preceding state causally relates itself to the succeeding state. In other words, this condition refers to the proximate or immediately contiguous cause. This causal condition came in handy for the Buddhist theory of momentary existence. Given that a momentary existence was defined as having no duration, it did not allow for the preceding event to exert any influence on the succeeding event.

Thus, when a consciousness arises, say, a visual consciousness, it arises depending upon the above four causal conditions. For example, when the eye comes into contact with the colour red, an object (*ālambana*), for example, the colour red, is presented in it; the sense organ, for example, the eyes, the light, and the sun will be the *hetu*; the immediately preceding cognition will be *samanantara*; and the thought—effort and reasoning involved—will be the dominant factor adhibati.

Note that all these causal conditions, the object of consciousness, the sense organs, and all the rest—particularly the *ālambana* and the *adhipati* which in a naturalistic account (Vaiśeṣika) would be external to conscious-ness belonging to the external world—are, for the Buddhists, also elements of consciousness. In other words, the causes are internal to the structure of *vijñapti*. This amounts to arguing as follows: each *vijñapti* arises by itself and perishes by itself, because the causal elements themselves on which *vijñapti* depends, in order to arise, belong either

to its structure or to the series. Nothing outside of consciousness causes consciousness.

This account is difficult to describe accurately in view of the natural tendency to separate consciousness from things in the external world, especially from the body. Perhaps, comparing the Buddhist account with other Indian theories might provide some insights, and help the reader understand the Buddhist account better.

The Buddhists alone in the Indian tradition divided the various types of consciousness according to the nature of sensuous and bodily elements, which internally characterize it. No other school of thought in the Indian tradition spoke of the visual consciousness, auditory consciousness, tactual consciousness, olfactory consciousness, and gustatory consciousness. The Vaiśeṣika did recognize that a cognition is caused by the contact of a visual sense organ with its object. The resulting cognition may be called visual perception. On the Vaiśeṣika view cognition is a consciousness or the knowledge of the appropriate object; it is visual in the sense that it is caused by the visual sense organ; its object is *rūpa* or colour. So much also goes into the Buddhist account. However, on the Buddhist account, something more is intended, namely, that the resulting *consciousness itself is visual*; not merely that its object is *rūpa* or colour.

It is important to emphasize how radically different the Buddhist school is from all other Hindu schools of philosophy. In all the Hindu schools of philosophy, including Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṁkhya, consciousness is *nirākāra* or formless as explained earlier, however for the Buddhists, consciousness is *sākāra*. The sensuous object, the colour, for example, that I see in front of me, in itself is a structural component of the totality of my consciousness of that moment. That is what is meant by saying that every consciousness on the Buddhist theory excepting thinking consciousness and *ālaya-vijñāna* have hyletic components. They are not what is in the Vedāntic discourse called *śudhacaitanya* (pure consciousness), which is merely a principle of manifestation without any content to it. The Buddhist consciousness, on the other hand, is completely concretized with all its sensuous content as though built into it, but with its own arising and perishing. In doing all this in a remarkable way, naturalism and empiricism are fused with the resulting theory of consciousness. In many respects the Yogācāra Buddhist theory of consciousness comes close to the Husserlian phenomenological theory according to which even consciousness which has been purified through

epochē or bracketing still has all its concrete richness of content, it is only freed from all metaphysical interpretations.

In order to understand the Buddhist theory still better, let me contrast it with other Indian theories from another perspective, namely, to what extent identity and difference hold good of consciousness. All schools of Indian philosophy, with the exception of Advaita Vedānta, admit in different measures both identity and difference into consciousness. The Buddhist in this regard stands at the other end from Advaita Vedānta by admitting only differences into the structure of consciousness. Differences are either internal or external; external differences are either *sajatīya* or *vijatīya*, that is, homogeneous or heterogeneous. Admitting a real 'other' to consciousness would be admitting heterogeneous difference. This is the case with Sāṃkhya which admits the difference between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*; *prakṛti* is a real other to consciousness. The same would be the case with realist philosophies like Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā. The world for these schools of philosophers is outside of consciousness; it is other than the consciousness. To admit many instances of consciousness such as many *puruṣas* in Sāṃkhya is to admit homogeneous differences. These *puruṣas* are all consciousness in the same way as particular horses are instances of horseness. The Advaita Vedānta, on the other hand, excludes all differences from the being and the nature of consciousness. I shall discuss this position later in this book. For my immediate purpose, it is sufficient to note that for Advaita Vedānta, for whom consciousness alone is real, there is neither external nor internal difference within it; it is not only one but also undifferentiated. It is pure identity. For the early Buddhists (*svasaṃvedanavādins*, i.e., the Sautrāntikas and the Vaibhāṣikas), conscious-ness admits of all kinds of difference. It is different from matter, which they admit to be real; there are many streams of consciousness, each different from the other and each stream having internal differences between the events which constitute it. The Yogācāra taking *vijñāna* alone to be real gets rid of external heterogeneous difference, there being nothing other than *vijñāna*. But there are still many series or streams and each one contains its internal constituents or members. The Buddhists carry this picture to its logical consequence; each event of consciousness has two phases, namely, its arising and its perishing and each of these two again has its own arising and perishing, namely, arising of arising, perishing of arising, arising of perishing, and perishing of perishing. Whether in each case, one wishes to have a third event or phase called being between the two is left undecided. Putting such a being between arising and perishing in

each case would bring the Buddhist position closer to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika position with regard to the inner qualities or *guṇas* of the self. Such a picture of the life of consciousness makes it really a flux with nothing abiding, no identity, but permeated only with differences. There would be no internal perception of these events, for an event would be no more by the time it is internally cognized. What we would be perceiving in that case would be really a trace and not the original event. Hence the importance of the idea of 'trace' in the Buddhist account. The Buddhists avoid explicitly drawing these consequences by insisting on the self-shining character of each event of consciousness. Consciousness, even in its minutest element, is *svasaṃvedana*; it manifests itself without waiting for an inner perception of it. We then have something other than endlessly running after traces.

Consciousness then in the Buddhist account is a stream of events each one of which is *svasaṃvedana* and each leaving traces and those traces again their traces and so on ad infinitum. The thesis of the concept of *ālaya-vijñāna* or warehouse-consciousness was introduced to make it possible that the traces are not being ceaselessly dissipated, allowing no repetition and recollection. The *ālaya-vijñāna* is a warehouse for traces of past experiences capable of being awakened or activated and determining the cause and nature of one's experiences. The two theses that (1) each *vijñāna* is momentary, and that (2) there is no external world made it imperative that the Yogācāras postulate something like *ālaya* to explain continuity. The *ālaya* may indeed be the earliest hypothesis of an unconscious capable of influencing the direction of a conscious life. But it needs to be made coherent with the rest of the theory and practically it needs to be formulated in such a manner as allows the unconscious life to be either activated or neutralized.

Śaṃkara in his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* discusses some of the difficulties with the Yogācāra's position and draws the attention of his readers to the question of coherence. Śaṃkara argues that, for the Vijñānavādin Buddhistș, the form of any object can be explained solely on the basis of consciousness, because these forms are contained within consciousness, and so the Buddhists conclude that the hypothesis of externally existing object is superfluous.[39] Śaṃkara points out that the external world exists; perception testifies to its existence. When we perceive, we perceive external objects like a post, a wall, etc. In response to the Buddhists' argument that consciousness itself appears as external, Śaṃkara says that if there is no external world, how can Buddhists claim that the content of consciousness appears 'as if' external? When I perceive

an object X, my perception takes the form 'this is X' and not 'this is like X'. Unless there are real snakes, a rope cannot appear as a snake. Śaṃkara further argues that the simultaneity between external objects and ideas does not prove their identity. In our knowledge, say, of the 'knowledge of a jar', or the 'knowledge of a cloth', the difference resides in the qualifying (*viśeṣaṇa*) parts, for example, the jar and the cloth, and not in the consciousness of these objects themselves. This proves that the consciousnesses and the objects are distinct; differences in external objects account for the differences in cognition, just as when we perceive a black cow and a white cow, the attributes blackness and whiteness differ but cowness remains constant. Thus, there is a difference between external object and our consciousness of it.

For Śaṃkara, perception provides a testimony to the existence of external objects. Against the Yogācāra view of the external objects, Śaṃkara points out:

> One who admits only cognition (*vijñāna*) has to explain why it is that he does not admit external objects such as pillar and wall. To say that only a cognition is experienced will not do, for it is reasonable to say that external objects also are experienced. It may be objected that a cognition, being like [a] lamp, of the nature of manifestation, experiences itself (or, is itself experienced) while external objects are not like that. To this, one could reply that it would amount to self contradictory admission that it acts upon itself, like fire burning itself .... It cannot be the case that cognition, even if different from objects, experiences itself, for the idea of acting upon itself is contradictory.[40]

Śaṃkara points out that the Buddhist thesis that a *vijñāna*, like a lamp, manifests itself and does not require another *vijñāna* to manifest it, amounts to saying that knowledge does not require a subject, which is absurd; it is like arguing that a thousand lamps manifest themselves inside an impenetrable rock. Finally, Śaṃkara points out that even if we assume for the sake of argument that there are no external objects, Buddhists must explain how a cognition arises, in the absence of external objects.[41] What is the substratum of these cognitions? The Buddhists attempt to account for these cognitions by arguing that present cognitions can be explained by the earlier cognitions, which in turn can be accounted for on the basis of the residual traces stored in the *ālaya*. If this is so, argues Śaṃkara, how do these residual traces arise given that there are no external objects? To say that there is a beginningless series of the residual traces is absurd. There must be some substratum in which these residual traces reside. It could be argued that the *ālaya* itself is the substratum of

the residual traces. But since the *ālaya* is momentary like any other consciousness, it would be no more capable of doing what the original experiences could not. If on the other hand the *ālaya* is granted a certain permanence to be able to do its job, there would be inconsistency between the thesis of the permanence of *ālaya* and the thesis of momentariness.[42]

In short, given that the mental cognitions are inert, they cannot reveal themselves. A cognition points to something beyond it, to a cognizer. Some sort of abiding, permanent, connecting principle is needed to explain memory, recognition, and so on. In the absence of such a principle, our everyday normal activities cannot be accounted for. All cognitions need a basis, and that basis is the unchanging seer. Hence, the need for the self-luminous witness-consciousness to reveal mental cognitions. This witness is an eternal seer whose sight is never destroyed. I shall return to this concept in the next chapter on Advaita.

It seems to me that the Buddhists have two alternatives open to them. I think one alternative for the Yogācāra is to refuse to ascribe permanence, however limited, to the *ālaya*, and to make it into a series of traces, traces of traces, and so on ad infinitum, thereby making it almost literally the equivalent of what Derrida calls '*differanz*' whose explanatory value cannot be measured simply by asking how it makes memory and recognition possible, because our ordinary concepts of memory and recognition are geared towards a metaphysics of abiding entities. In that case, the Buddhist vision of wisdom and nirvāṇa would require a complete deconstruction of the notion of presence (that something is and that something is being perceived) and replace it by the notion of absence or trace which is all that we ever reach. The other alternative is to elevate the *ālaya* to the status of the eternal, unchanging self and abandon the original concept of ever-changing consciousness, which will take Yogācāra to the vicinity of Advaita Vedānta. I think the more interesting possibility for the Yogācāra is the former and not the latter. As suggested by me earlier, it requires a developed theory of time-consciousness, which the Yogācāra did not explicitly thematize though all the ingredients for doing so were available at their disposal.

I have referred earlier to what I call the naturalistic elements in the Buddhist theory. One aspect of it was the hyletic nature of consciousness to which I have already drawn attention. The other aspect is indicated in the way the discourse on consciousness appears within the twelve-membered series of dependent origination. Of these twelve factors, the third member (the initial consciousness of the embryo) of the doctrine

of dependent arising is the Yogācāra's *ālaya-vijñāna.* The first two (ignorance and karmas) refer to the past life and the last two pertain to the future (birth and death). Given the Buddhist account of causality, the fist two members must in some way causally determine the present series with which a new life begins. In what way or by what mechanism do the past karmas influence the consciousness of the embryo within the womb? For the Buddhist there is an embryonic consciousness which must itself be a stream and which matures into an adult consciousness. The point that needs to be emphasized is that the birth of a conscious life is not an entirely new beginning but a continuation of the conscious series which has been transmitted from the past through the mother's womb. How does the transmission take place? Is it the case that in some manner we do not further understand how consciousness is transmitted or the series continues through the egg and the sperm of the parents, and so does the *ālaya* of the past life remain continuous with the *ālaya* of the present? How should one construe the meanings of past and present in this context? How do past experiences influence the present? Each *vijñāna* is destroyed in an instant. How does it influence the future? What initially seemed like a purely phenomenalized account of consciousness, namely, consciousness as experienced in its concreteness is *now* being integrated into a naturalistic account of how conception begins and the embryonic consciousness picks up where death had seemingly interrupted the stream. Husserl had in his old age tried to make sense of the phenomena of birth and death and the closest he could come to making sense of them was by understanding death as falling into a long sleep and birth as an awakening. With their phenomenological bias, the Buddhists also must have tried to make sense of consciousness, intrinsically self-shining, as dying, falling into a static dormancy as in an embryo, and then emerging again into the full light of waking consciousness. How did they make sense of it all? The Vedānta and the Sāṃkhya schools did not encounter this problem, they completely separated consciousness from nature. The Buddhists by fusing the natural with the spiritual not only naturalized consciousness in the manner described above but also must have spiritualized the natural in a manner that we do not quite comprehend. Believing as they did, like other participants in the Indian philosophic discourse in karma and rebirth, they had to give an account of karma and rebirth that is not to be a mere appearance owing to *avidyā* of the unchanging ātman, but that is to be a part of the real natural process of birth and death and reincarnation. Thus, the Yogācāra philosophers in their theory of consciousness assimilate the spiritual and naturalist aspects together retaining both the intentional

and the causal accounts, the hyletic and the *svasaṃvedana* aspects of consciousness.

Before concluding this chapter, I shall bring one final point to the attention of my readers. If the account of the Yogācāra Buddhist theory of consciousness given in the preceding pages is accurate, it cannot be taken to be an entirely subjectivist theory; rather it is subjectivist–objectivist. On the Yogācāra theory, consciousness is not an eternal principle; it is a series of instantaneous events, brought about by causal conditions which, to be sure, are material, thereby leading one to believe that the Yogācāra account of consciousness is empirical. However, when we proceed further, we realize that there are other components of this theory, which belie its characterization as empirical. For example, consciousness on this view does not belong to an empirical self, although the empirical self is constituted by a stream of consciousness. Its objects are not the empirical objects, but rather trans-empirical. On the Yogācāra Buddhist theory of consciousness, it is still self-shining (*svasaṃvedana*) and not dependent upon anything else to manifest it. So we can say that the Yogācāra account is in one sense empirical, and in another sense it is not. It is not transcendental, because it takes consciousness to be caused. Insofar as the Yogācārin takes consciousness to be *svayaṃprakāśa*, that is, self-manifesting, it is subjective. However, since they regard consciousness as caused by objective conditions, it is also objective. Elements of the naturalism that influenced the origin of Buddhism survive in their account. Thus, it seems appropriate to classify the Yogācāra account of consciousness as partly objectivist and partly subjectivist, given that it encompasses within its fold a combination of the spiritual and the naturalist aspects, while retaining both the intentional and the causal accounts—the hyletic and the *svasaṃvedana* aspects of consciousness. Yogācāra shares with Vedānta this thesis that consciousness is *svasaṃvedana*, in spite of the differences in their understanding of it.

Notes

1. *Majjhima Nikāya*, I. 262–4.

2. *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, xxii.90. Henry Clark Warren, *Buddhism in Translations* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 166. Henceforth this book will be cited as Warren.

3. *Manas* is generally translated as 'mind'. In the early Buddhist tradition, *manas* was taken to be one of the twelve sense-fields (*āyatanas*) which included six pairs of base and object. According to this account, *manas*, the mind-organ,

is one of the six bases and thoughts would be its objects. Like any other sense organ, mind can be restrained, developed, and trained. Buddha often talks with his disciples about the value of controlling the six faculties. It played an important role in the Abhidharma analysis of the early Buddhist psychologists and philosophers. In Mahāyāna, and especially in the Yogācāra school, *manas* wore an additional hat as one of the eight consciousnesses that received and disposed of data from the prior six consciousnesses. It became the pivot around which their conception of the ego, the I-consciousness, revolved. It was taken to be an evolute of the eighth consciousness, known as the 'warehouse-consciousness' (*ālaya-vijñāna*). In this account, the seventh consciousness represents the surface of the mind, and the warehouse-consciousness serves as the basis of all other mind activity.

4. *Majjhima Nikāya*, 38; Warren, p, 183.

5. In Vasubandhu's words, *Vijñāna* is the 'raw grasping' of an object. See *Abhidharmakośbhāṣyam*, ed. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, English translation by Leo M. Pruden (Berkeley, California: Asia Humanities Press, 1991), vol. I, p. 74. Henceforth this work will be cited as Poussin. It is not possible to experience consciousness directly. As a blade cannot cut itself, similarly one cannot experience consciousness directly as an object. For as soon as one focuses on the consciousness, it ceases to be the subject; it becomes an object.

6. *Majjhima Nikāya*, 38; Warren, p. 183.

7. *Visuddhi-Māgga*, Chapter XIV; Warren, p. 156.

8. Dharmas are the elements (compounded and non-compounded) such as mind, matter, reality, ideas—in general the basic factors or elements of experience.

9. Takasuku places Vasubandhu between 420 and 500 CE. Paramārtha wrote his biography sometime between 468 and 568 CE.

10. He divides dharmas into *saṃskṛta* (conditioned) and *asaṃskṛta* (unconditioned) dharmas. There are seventy-two conditioned and three unconditioned dharmas. Whereas the conditioned dharmas arise and perish, the unconditioned ones are eternal. The three unconditioned ones are: nirvāṇa, empty space, and, curiously enough, meditative emptiness of consciousness. The dharmas include within their fold a comprehensive description of Buddhist doctrines, ranging from cosmology and theories of perception to issues surrounding moral problems, yogic practices, and the meaning and significance of rebirth, as well as the virtues that one has to cultivate on the path to nirvāṇa, which itself is listed as one of the three unconditioned dharmas.

11. *vijñaptimātram evitad asad arthāvabhāsanāt*
yathā taimirikasyāsat keśa candādi darśanaṃ

Viṃśatikā, Verse 1. Henceforth this work will be cited as VV.

12. Ibid., Verse 2.

13. Ibid., Verses 3–7.

14. 'Indeed it is not the eyeball that represents the organ, but a respective sensuous faculty. In assuming a subconscious store of consciousness instead of an external world and a Biotic Force instead of the physical sense-organs, we will be able to account for the process of cognition. There will be no contradiction.' From Dignāga's *Ālambana-Parikṣā*, taken from Th. Stcherbatsky's, *Buddhist Logic*, Vol. I (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), pp. 520–1.

15. Ibid., pp. 519–20.

16. Ibid., p. 520.

17. Śaṃkara in his BSBh II.2.28 makes some of the same points.

18. *ātma-dharmopacāro hi vividho yaḥ pravartate*
vijñāna-pariṇāme 'sau pariṇāmaḥ sa ca tridhdā
vipāko mananākhyaś-ca vijñaptir-viṣayasya ca
tatrālayākhyṃ vijñānaṃ vīpakaḥ sarva bījakaṃ.

Triṃśikā, Verses 1–2, p. 49. Henceforth this work will be cited as TS.

19. D. T. Suzuki (tr.), *The Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), pp. 2, 127.

20. The term '*dhātu*' is derived from the √*dhar* meaning, 'to hold'. 'That which carries its own characteristic mark is '*dhātu*'. They are so called since they are devoid of being or life (*nisattā nijīva*).' See *Nārada Mahāthera, A Manual of Abhidhamma* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1987), p. 200.

21. *Asaṅga Mahāyāna Śaṃgraha,* Chapter 2.

22. *Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra*, in Daisatz T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Laṇkāvatāra Sūtra* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1930; reprinted 1975), p. 173.

23. Ibid., p. 42.

24. *asaṃviditakopādi-sthānana-vijñaptikaṃ ca tat.*
sadā sparśa-manaskāra-vit-saṃjñā-cetanānvitam.

TS, Verse 3, taken from Thomas E. Wood, *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 50. Henceforth this translation will be cited as Wood.

25. *upekṣā vedanā tatrānivṛtāvyākṛtaṃ ca tat*
tathā sparśādayas-tac-ca vartate srota-saughavat.

TS, Verse 4, Wood, p. 50.

26. Ibid., Verse 19, Wood, p. 53.

27. The difference between the *ālaya-vijñāna* of Yogācāra and the unconscious of the Ābhidharma is as follows: In the Ābhidharmikas, external stimulus produces vibration in the unconscious, whereas in the Yogācāra the ripening of the seed within the warehouse-consciousness creates agitation and starts the process of transformation.

28. Wood, Verses 15–16.

29. Ibid., Verse 15.

30. Ibid., Verses 7, 19.

31. Ibid., Verse 8.

32. Ibid., Verses 15–16.

33. Edward Hamlin, 'Discourse in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*', *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 11 (1983), p. 281.

34. Although the term '*pariṇāma*' was first used by Vasubandhu, the idea of reciprocal dependence of the *ālaya-vijñāna* and the seven manifest consciousnesses was first formulated by Asaṅga in *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*.

35. The term '*citta*' is derived from the Sanskrit verb root √*cit*, meaning 'to think'. This term is generally translated as 'mind' or 'thought'. In early Buddhist literature, the term has been used synonymously with *manas* ('mind organ') and *vijñāna* ('consciousness'). It played a central role in Ābhidharma psychological analysis. Sarvāstivādins classify it as one of their seventy-five 'dharmas'. The Yogācāras clarify this term further. They use it as a synonym for the *ālaya-vijñāna* or 'warehouse-consciousness'. When compounded with '*mātra*', it becomes '*cittamātra*', or 'mind only', the most important concept of the Yogācāra school.

'*Caitta*' is equivalent to that which is thought; it is content of thought.

36. Poussin, Vol. I, p. 296. Kalupahana notes: 'It may appear that there is no such theory of relations (*paccaya*) in the early discourses and that this is an innovation of the Abbidhamma. This is partly true. One certainly cannot find an elaborate theory of relations during the early period. Yet even in their discursive treatment, the discourses refer to relations such as roots (*mūlaṃ*), dominances (*adhipati*), immediacy (*anantara*), and so on. The Abhidhammikas, in contrast, were compelled to focus on relations because of their extensive but non-discursive enumeration and classification of events. Without a process of synthesis, enumeration and classification would have left them with a mass of disconnected events. The theory of relations thus serves the same function that "dependent arising" (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) fulfilled in the early discourse.' David J. Kalupahana, *A Short History of Buddhist Philosophy* (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1992), p. 149.

37. For example, *ko paccayo*? *ko hetu*? What is the cause? What is the reason? In the *Paṭṭhānas*, twenty-four such *paccaya*s are enumerated, and *hetu* is taken to be one of these twenty-four. See Nyanatiloka Mahathera, *Guide through the Abhidhamma-Piṭaka* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1971), p. 117.

38. *A Manual of Abhidhamma*, Narad Maha Thera, p. 374. A more comprehensive definition of this *pratyaya* is found in the Sanskrit Ābhidharma tradition where it is defined as a universal condition, thereby making it possible for the Yogācāra interpreters to include under this category a host of new types of relations.

39. *aṅgīkṛte ca tasminviṣayākārasya jñānena eva avaruddhatvād anarthikā bāhyārtha sadbhāvakalpanā.* BSBh, II.2.28.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., II.2.30.

42. Ibid., II.2.20, II.2.30.

5

Subjectivist–Transcendental Theory of Advaita Vedānta

It is not an exaggeration to say that Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta is one of the most widely known and influential schools of Indian philosophy. As a system of Vedānta, Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta is based upon the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, and the *Brahmasūtras.* On these texts, Śaṃkara wrote exegetical commentaries in which he developed his philosophical position and demonstrated that his position is in accordance with these texts, besides advancing independent arguments in favour of his own position. His method of doing philosophy was very typically Vedāntic. There is no lack of rational argumentation in his writings, and what may be absent there is more than compensated by his numerous commentators and followers. The system developed over several centuries. By the end of the sixteenth century, which is approximately 700 to 800 years after Śaṃkara the system reached its intellectual height. So my reference to Advaita Vedānta in this chapter includes not only Śaṃkara's own writing but also the writings of his followers, especially of those belonging to what is known as the Vivaraṇa interpretation of Advaita.[1]

The Vedānta philosophy in general—and the Vedānta theory of consciousness in particular—derives from a certain interpretation and understanding of the Upaniṣads, which constitute a genre of texts capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways. Thus, no one school of Vedānta can lay an exclusive claim to fidelity to these texts. I have already noted in the chapter on the Upaniṣads that much of the Upaniṣadic texts emphasize the coherence and unity of all things by identifying a single fundamental principle which underlies everything and explicates everything. The term 'brahman' in the Upaniṣads designates this fundamental principle. This fundamental principle is also the core of each individual, and this core has been designated as the 'ātman'. In other words, the ātman and the brahman are one.[2] The chapter on the Upaniṣads provides a discussion of the brahman/ātman from the

psychological, epistemological, and metaphysical perspectives culminating in the conception of the brahman/ātman as consciousness. In the Upaniṣadic accounts, ātman/brahman is described not only as existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*), and bliss (*ānanda*),[3] but also as truth (*satyaṃ*), knowledge (*jñānaṃ*), and infinite (*anantaṃ*).[4] The Advaita Vedānta theory of consciousness is founded upon such descriptions. Metaphysically it aims at showing that consciousness is not only being (*sat*) and bliss; it is also the truth and the infinite. Clearly, all these are very far from our everyday ordinary or even scientific perspective on consciousness. It, therefore, is obligatory on the Advaita philosophers to forge a link between—better yet a path from—these perspectives on consciousness to their grand metaphysical thesis of the identity between the subjective and the objective.

I

There is no doubt that our ordinary usages of 'consciousness' have some clear features. Some of these features were very famously captured in the Western thought by Descartes. In the first place, consciousness is ascribed to oneself in the first person singular, which does not mean that it is not ascribed to the other. However, as Strawson argued,[5] ascribing states of consciousness to oneself is not based upon evidence of one's own behaviour while ascribing it to others is based on the observation of the behaviour of others. This is the same as saying that consciousness is ascribed immediately only to oneself without the mediation of the ascription of the bodily states. Besides this immediacy, the Cartesian tradition takes consciousness to be the inner as opposed to the body, which is the outer; consciousness is private in the sense that one's consciousness is immediately accessible only to one's own self and to no one else. Let me further add to this well-known Cartesian thesis that the reports about one's consciousness are infallible, whereas reports about the bodies as well as the states of consciousness of others may be mistaken. I think these three features, namely, immediacy, inner nature of consciousness, and infallibility may be regarded as major features of a widely prevalent conception of consciousness. Most discussions of consciousness today begin with these. Sanskrit philosophical discourse recognizes all three features: *aparokṣatva*, *pratyaksatva*, and *abādhitatva*. Beginning with these three features, it would take a great deal of philosophical critique to go beyond them to the full-fledged

Advaita understanding of consciousness. In one sense, Advaita retains all these three. On the fully developed Advaita theory, *cit* is *aparokṣa*, *pratyak*, and *abādhita*. However, the claim that *cit* is all three and the Cartesian picture are still not quite the same. The Cartesian picture grounds consciousness in the 'I', which itself is construed as an entity in the world. As Husserl puts it: the Cartesian ego is really a part of the world.[6] The Advaitic consciousness, far from being a part of the world, is rather the foundation of the world. The Cartesian immediacy is an inner perception by oneself of one's own conscious states, a feature which Brentano sought to capture in his idea of inner perception. He notes: 'Every mental act is conscious; it includes within it a consciousness of itself.'[7] The Advaitic immediacy of consciousness is its self-luminosity, which does not require an ego's introspective knowledge of oneself. The Cartesian infallibility is the impossibility of doubting whether I am conscious or not. The Advaitic *abādhitatva* is the impossibility of assigning to consciousness any of the various forms of negation including even difference or *anyonyābhāva*.[8] Thus the Advaitic conception of consciousness is vastly different from the Cartesian, although the Cartesian view may serve as a point of departure in our attempt to understand the Advaita Vedānta conception.

I cannot emphasize enough that the Advaita Vedānta philosophy is not Cartesian. However, one can follow a possible path from the Cartesian position to the Advaita thesis. The Cartesian philosophy, first of all, is guilty of a metaphysical dualism between the body and the mind, the outer and the inner, the public and the private. Philosophically, this dualism has been subjected to various kinds of criticisms. The question arises: what is the relation between the two? Causal interaction between the body and the mind, matter and consciousness, is not any more intelligible than a non-causal parallelism. Furthermore, if consciousness were private to each ego, then each ego would derive his/her concept of consciousness from his/her own case and there would be no way of ascribing it to another ego. One would incurably be a prisoner of one's own private mental states. If conscious-ness is infallible for the ego in the sense that 'I am thinking' can never be mistaken, so also an expression such as 'that patch of red' cannot but refer.

Attempts to overcome these Cartesian problems have been many and varied. One such attempt is to deny consciousness altogether and to identify it with a bodily state, perhaps with a brain state. Such an attempt is scientifically respectable, but leaves the first person ascription of consciousness and its immediacy totally unexplained. When I say I have

such and such conscious state, I do not necessarily know that I have such and such brain state. The suspicion of incurable privacy is understandable but the way to avoid it is not to court physicalism but to make consciousness a phenomenon which spans the divide between the public and the private. Another way of overcoming the alleged privacy of consciousness is to recognize that there is also something called bodily consciousness, which is none other than a sentient being's awareness of his/her own bodily movements, projects, and needs, all of which can be brought under the concept of bodily intentionality or subjectivity. Body then does not fall outside of consciousness as its absolute other, but consciousness may be seen to progressively develop through various stages, bodily, vital, psychic, and perhaps, what we may call spiritual. When one escapes the confines of the Cartesian ego, one realizes that consciousness is not necessarily an egological phenomenon, but is more like a field in which we all participate. There is not only the individual consciousness, as when I ascribe it to myself, there is also a collective and social consciousness as evidenced by the ascriptions of beliefs, desires, and hopes to a collective entity such as a community. Members of a community share in beliefs and thoughts, desires and hopes, awareness of common problems and obstacles to be overcome.

These thoughts break the artificial boundaries of an ego, open it to others, and we begin to realize that even though bodily pains, twitches, and twinges may be private, consciousness is not, excepting under a false attachment to one's narrow ego. The Advaita conception of consciousness as a universal, limitless, self-luminous field in which we all live and breathe, may now seem to be quite a plausible alternative and not merely a speculative abstraction.

While social phenomena such as mutual understanding, sharing, and in particular, sympathy point to a common trans-individual spirit, one may also learn from the progress of the physical sciences. The lesson that one may learn here is that the elementary particles constituting nature (which includes both physical and biological realms) are not tiny bits of matter as they were conventionally thought of, but rather point to a progressive dematerialization of matter, meaning that all our ordinary conceptions of matter begin to fail us when we try to apply them to elementary constituents.[9] This has almost unavoidably led to speculations as to whether they are to be regarded, to begin with, as bits of energy, and then by the same unavoidability think of that energy as something spiritual. It is not possible to arrive at a conclusive decision regarding these issues in this introduction. Suffice it to say, however, that here I

am concerned with making a *plausible* case for the Advaita theory of consciousness.

Another path away from the narrow egological consciousness is to press the point generally made in contemporary depth psychology that our conscious experiences derive from a large unconscious reservoir of thoughts and emotions. Freudian psychology brought to our attention small fragments of it. Jungian psychology emphasized other fragments especially those which belong to the collective unconscious. In general, taking into account many interesting phenomena connected with creativity, one may venture the hypothesis that a much larger field of consciousness underlies our limited surface mind and its operations.

II

It is important to remember at the very outset that consciousness and mind[10] are different, not simply for Advaita Vedānta, but for all systems of Hindu philosophy. Mind is generally construed as an inner sense,[11] a product of material nature and owes its cognitive powers to the preponderance of the *sattva guṇa* in it.[12]

Any plausible theory of consciousness must begin at the level of psychology, then move to epistemology, and finally, culminate in metaphysics. The Advaitic psychology draws a clear distinction between the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), the ego sense (*ahaṃkāra*)[13] and *cit* (consciousness). *Cit*, however, is not a sense organ; it is not an instrument for producing an effect, such as cognition; it is an ever-present self-luminous entity, which while being self-luminous, is the source of the manifestation of all things. If materialism is taken to signify a theory that regards mind as a product of matter, most Indian systems could be construed as materialistic. However, it is perhaps better to say that these systems are naturalistic, given that the mind is a product of 'nature' (*prakṛti*). After saying this I must add the caveat, namely, that the nature in itself, in Sāṃkhya as well as in Advaita Vedānta, is conceived as consisting not of atoms, but of the three *guṇas*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Consequently, though it is true that their philosophy of mind is naturalistic, it is also true that their conception of nature is not materialistic. It is against this background, that the Advaita theory of consciousness should be considered.

All this amounts to arguing that what the nature or natural elements could produce must already be contained in nature. Causal production,

on the Advaita and the Sāṃkhya accounts simply manifests what was implicitly contained in the material cause, which, in turn, would imply that knowledge that involves consciousness cannot be produced by natural elements alone. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas hold that such entities as mind, sense organs, objects in the world, by coming in contact with each other in an appropriate manner produce knowledge in the self. In effect, they hold that these entities as well as their contacts—all of which are natural entities—result in consciousness. On this account, even the self, though non-conscious, becomes the seat where consciousness arises out of natural causes. The Advaitins reject the natural and the causal account of the origin of knowledge as well as of consciousness. Their rejection is based on the belief that non-being cannot become being. Consciousness cannot arise out of non-conscious conditions, although non-conscious conditions may make consciousness manifest.[14] Consciousness, on the Advaita view, is self-luminous, although its self-luminosity may be covered up more or less, or uncovered more or less, by natural elements.

The self is not a non-conscious substance. Among systems of Hindu philosophy, consciousness may relate to the self in any of the three ways: (1) as a property of the self, (2) as an act of the self, and (3) as its essence. We have already seen that the Vaiśeṣikas argue that consciousness, though a property of the self, is not an essential but rather a contingent property. It is not always there in the self; it arises when appropriate conditions are satisfied and disappears in the absence of those conditions. In the state of deep sleep, according to the Vaiśeṣikas, the conditions necessary for consciousness to arise do not obtain. Consequently, the state of deep sleep lacks consciousness. Such a view is unacceptable to an Advaitin, because it conflicts with his/her basic causal theory that an effect is pre-existent in its material cause. In the case of deep sleep, the Advaitins hold that consciousness is present, and such retrospective judgements as 'I slept well'[15] provide a testimony to its existence. Thus, consciousness is neither a property of the self brought about by appropriate causal conditions, nor is it an act of the self. We also know that some Mīmāṃsakas, on the other hand, hold that consciousness is an act of the self, which results in making its object known. It is from such knownness of an object that, on this view, we infer the occurrences of an act of consciousness. The act is not directly available to inspection, but is inferred on the basis of its result, which is the property of 'knownness' accruing to its object. This theory is no more plausible than the Vaiśeṣika theory. If the purpose of consciousness is simply to manifest

its object, it cannot result in changing the object from the simple object to the known object. If knowledge produces a new property in its object called 'knownness', knowing this property would produce a further property of knownness in it, thereby leading to an infinite regress. The conclusion is that consciousness must not be construed as a process, or as an activity, but only as a principle of manifestation, which, in short, is the Advaita view.

On the Advaita view then consciousness is neither a property nor an act of the self, but rather its constant ever-present essence. If by essence one means a set of properties without which a thing cannot be what it is, consciousness cannot be an essence of the self, for in that sense an essence must be a property or a group of properties. However, in saying 'consciousness is the essence of the self', one may mean that the self *is* consciousness, that the two are identical. This is indeed what the Advaitins mean. However, any attempt to understand the Advaita thesis is fraught with difficulties, given that their thesis is so remote from our ordinary everyday understanding. In our everyday experiences, we hear people say 'I am conscious', and not 'I am consciousness'. The former usage substantiates the Vaiśeṣika position. The Vaiśeṣikas in their metaphysical theory admit *samavāya* or the relation of inherence[16] between substance and its qualities. Śaṃkara in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* raises various difficulties in the Vaiśeṣika theory of *samavāya*,[17] and replaces it with the relation of *tādātmya* or identity. Thus in 'the blue lotus' there do not exist two entities, the colour 'blue' and the substance 'lotus', the former inhering in the latter, but only one entity, the one substance, of which 'being blue' is an aspect. In this case, the blue and the lotus enter into an identity. The same is true of 'I am conscious'. Consciousness in this case is not a property inhering in myself, but rather the two, being conscious and myself, are one and the same thing; there obtains between them, not identity in the sense of oneness, but *tādātmya* which is a relation of identity that is compatible with surface differences.

Why not then say 'I am consciousness'? I must point out that however implausible the sentence may seem to be in English, the sentence, in Sanskrit '*cit ahaṃ*', is not only not implausible but has been used by authors frequently. Such being the relation of identity between the 'I' and consciousness, the relation includes difference within it. Hence 'I am consciousness' might be ontologically closer to the truth; it does not express the complicated identity-cum-difference relation between consciousness as such and the same consciousness limited by the sense of 'I'. The two are both identical and different, identity being the more

fundamental truth just as the space in itself and the space as limited by the four walls of this room are both identical and different. Additionally, the distinction between consciousness and what passes in English philosophical discourse as knowledge must be kept in mind in order to understand the Advaita thesis. An exact translation of the word 'knowledge', as used in the West, will not be '*cit*' but '*pramājñāna*', which is a true cognition that arises in an appropriate manner; that is, through a *pramāṇa* and by making its object known.[18] The opposite of *pramā* is *apramā*, a cognition that is not true to its object; it is that which takes its object as what the latter is not. So when the Advaitin argues that the self is identical with consciousness, she does not mean that *pramā* and *apramā* do not arise out of their respective causal conditions. Neither of these two, that is, *pramā* and *apramā*, is identical with *cit*. On the contrary, *cit* is common to both, and as we shall see later, in the absence of *cit*, neither *pramā* nor *apramā* would be possible. Thus, when the Vaiśeṣikas claim that consciousness is a property of the self, they are not making a distinction between *cit* and knowledge. The Advaitins, on the other hand, clearly distinguish between *cit* and knowledge. My knowledge of a particular object arises and perishes; but *cit* is the permanent nature of my self.

III

The Advaitic view of consciousness may be stated in the following theses:

1. Self-luminosity is the defining property of consciousness. The Advaitins[19] hold that self-luminosity is the fitness of being immediately known without being an object of any cognition (*avedyatve sati aparokṣavyavahārayogyatvaṃ svayaṃprakāśasya lakṣaṇaṃ*). In concrete terms, it amounts to saying that consciousness is immediately experienced, even though it is not an object of knowledge.
2. Consciousness is not intentional; that is, it is not consciousness 'of' and 'for' something. To be intentional means to have an object. Pure consciousness is that from which all content has been subtracted. Thus, intentionality is extrinsic to the nature of consciousness.
3. Consciousness is not egological; that is to say, it does not centre on an ego or 'I'. On the contrary, the ego is a mundane object of consciousness.

4. Consciousness does not admit of any negations, for all negations are possible objects of consciousness. Not having antecedent negation (*prāgabhāva*), consciousness is beginningless. Not having consequent negation (*dhvaṃsābhāva*), consciousness has no end. Consciousness is both beginningless and has no end, it does not undergo any real change, for change is a series of antecedent and consequent negations. Given that consciousness does not admit of any mutual negation (*anyonyābhāva*), it does not admit of any difference either; thus it is free from all external and internal distinctions. There are two varieties of external distinctions: heterogeneous (*vijātīya*) and homogeneous (*sajātīya*). A physical object, say, a chair, is different from (*vijātīya*) another physical object, say, a table (distinction among objects of different classes). It (a chair) is also different from (*sajātīya*) other chairs (distinction among objects of the same class). In addition to these two, consciousness does not possess any internal (*svagata*) differentiation either. The difference of a part of the chair from other parts is an internal difference. Consciousness does not have parts, and accordingly, it does not, and cannot, possess any kind of internal differentiation either. Hence, there is nothing either similar or dissimilar to consciousness. If one excludes all these differences, it would follow that consciousness is one, without any internal differentiations, that there are not many consciousnesses different from each other but only one, and also that there is no real other to consciousness. All others to consciousness are mere appearances.
5. Consciousness is not temporal; time as well as space pertain to the objects of consciousness, not to consciousness itself. Not being in time, consciousness does not admit of any change, while all change is a possible object of consciousness.
6. Consciousness and being are identical. For things other than consciousness, 'to be' on the Advaita theory is 'to be manifested' by or 'to be an object' of consciousness. But consciousness itself is the source of being, that from which all entities derive their being. If one distinguishes between Being and beings (as for example, has been done by Heidegger), then for Advaita, Being *is* consciousness, while all objects are entities.

7. Consciousness is not only Being but also the highest value, good, and bliss. Any value that attaches to objects in the sense of well-being that is brought about by objects, is passing or transitory, but on realizing one's self as pure consciousness, the Advaita argues, one achieves the highest good and enjoys the highest bliss, by reaching which nothing remains to be reached. Thus, in the Advaita theory of consciousness, metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology come together.

A review of the central theses about consciousness outlined above reveals that the Advaita theory of consciousness is in one respect simpler and in another respect more complex than all the theories discussed until now. It is simpler because the description of consciousness rests upon one predication, that is, manifestation or *prakāśa*. It is often described in the Advaita literature as *prakāśa eka rasa*, meaning that which has only one *rasa* or essence, that is, manifestation. It is not a thing or a substance which manifests, for then there would be a difference between substance and its qualities, and that difference would be manifested by the principle that anything that becomes an object of consciousness could not belong to the nature of consciousness. Any difference of whatever kind—whether difference of consciousness from the world, or of one self from another, or of one state of consciousness from another—would really be a possible object of consciousness. Therefore, these differences cannot belong to its nature. But once one expels all differences from consciousness, there results something without any beginning and end, and so does not undergo any change. For after all, beginning implies prior absence (*prāgabhāva*), end implies posterior absence (*dhvaṃsābhāva*). In change, something which was not, comes into being, and that which is goes out of existence. All these absences or negations are objective categories (e.g., Vaiśeṣika *padārthas*) and, therefore, are possible objects of consciousness. As objects of consciousness, they do not characterize consciousness itself. Consciousness as a result becomes sheer presence, without any absence corrupting its nature, sheer being without any non-being. Here then the three concepts, namely, existence, presence, and manifestation are identified. To exist, for consciousness, is to be present, not to anything other than itself, but self-presence, while everything else is presented to it.

Several things about consciousness so conceived must be noted. Things in the world or in nature (*prakṛti* or *saṃsāra*) come and go, arise, and last for some time (not necessarily for an instant), and perish;

they are different from each other and they contain internal differences as well. But all these entities are known by consciousness, so consciousness is radically different from them, as light is from darkness. The empirical human being, the person, its body as well as such mental states as cognition, pleasure, pain, desire, love, hatred, his/her actions and the consequences of his/her actions, in sum, the person's role as a knower (*jñātā*), an agent (*kartā*), and an enjoyer (*bhoktā*), all constitute an interrelated system known as the world (*saṃsāra*). Thus the world, as well as any constituent of it, is a possible object of consciousness, and so it is not consciousness in itself. The judgement 'I am conscious' is, therefore, based on a confusion (*moha*) between different categories. In the preamble to his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras*, Śaṃkara categorically declares that the self and the not-self, the two fundamental components of human experience, are as opposed to each other as light and darkness. The self can never become the not-self and vice versa. Nor can the properties of the one be superimposed[20] on the other. In our everyday experiences, however, the two are confused, and assume such forms as 'I am this', and 'This is mine'. In the first form, one forgets the distinction between the self and the body; in the latter, the attributes of the self and those of the body are mixed up, thereby giving rise to a variety of superimpositions: it may be the superimposition of (a) the body on the self, e.g, 'I am a man', 'I am a woman'; (b) the properties of the body on the self, e.g, 'I am fat', 'I am thin'; (c) mental states such as desires, doubt, pleasure, pain on the self, e.g, 'I am happy', 'I am virtuous'; and (d) the properties of the sense organs on the self, for example, 'I am blind', 'I am deaf'. In short, the superimposition not only assumes the form of the 'I' but also of the 'mine'. The former is the superimposition of the substance (*dharmī*), the latter of the attribute (*dharma*). The reciprocal superimposition of the self and the not-self, and of the properties of the one on the other, results in the bondage of the empirical self. The empirical self acts and enjoys because of erroneous identification of the inner self with the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*).

In short, the word 'I' is a result of confusion between undifferentiated consciousness and the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*) belonging to the person. Once these superimpositions are dissolved and the metaphysical confusions removed, consciousness is seen to be one and eternal, differenceless, and yet manifesting all differences, the same in all persons though appearing to be different. The thesis is apparently very abstract: we do not in our everyday existence experience or recognize this one differenceless consciousness. All our consciousness that we are

acquainted with is permeated by differences. It always has a locus (*āśraya*) and an object (*viṣaya*), so that it always has the form, 'my consciousness of this jar'. In the same way there are many properties which qualify any consciousness at any moment. It is either tactile, or visual, or has some other sensuous modality. Or, it is purely intellectual which the Vedāntin and the Sāṃkhya call *buddhi*. Or, it exhibits degrees of clarity or confusion. It is either waking, or dreaming, or in a state of deep sleep. Alternatively, it is either consciousness drunk or consciousness sober. But these differences and modalities, on the Advaita theory, pertain not to consciousness per se, but to those conditions and limitations, which appear to affect it. We know, for example, that though space is one, owing to different limiting adjuncts it appears to be many. Likewise, we know that although the moon in the sky is one, its reflections in many different waters are many. The Advaitins similarly insist that consciousness is one with its only defining essence, namely, manifestation; it is not an abstract truth but the only principle that not only underlies all our experiences but also makes them possible while retaining its independence from them all.

IV

In order to understand the Advaita Vedānta position and the textual exposition more precisely, we must distinguish between the *vṛttis* (the mental modifications), *cit* (*śuddhacaitanya* or pure consciousness), and the *sākṣin* (the witness-consciousness). I shall begin with a brief review of what these concepts signify in Advaita Vedānta prior to unpacking and developing their roles in Advaita philosophy.

The *vṛttis* cannot, and must not, be identified either with the pure consciousness or the witness-consciousness. The function of *vṛtti* is to remove the veil of ignorance that covers the object to be known. *Vṛtti* at times has been translated as 'psychosis'.[21] Such a translation, however, has pejorative psychological connotations, and is, therefore, misleading. *Vṛtti* refers to an epistemic process or act. Therefore, it makes more sense to translate it as a 'mental mode'. The Advaitins make a distinction between two kinds of mental modes. These modes are transformations either of the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*) or of nescience (*avidyā*). When the activity of the inner sense is present—say in the perception of a table, or in the perception of a chair, etc.—cognition is the result of a modification of the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*). When the activity

of the inner sense is absent and yet there is presence of cognition, for example, in the illusory perception of shell as silver, cognition is due to a mode of nescience (*avidyāvṛtti*). These modes, truly speaking, become cognitions (*jñānas*) upon manifestation.

Nescience veils the self or pure consciousness and transforms itself into different modes. Pure consciousness in Advaita is the light that reveals the object. The Advaitins argue that without the lustre of pure consciousness, all objects, physical and mental, apparent and actual, merge in the darkness of nescience. Things are manifest in the universe through the light of consciousness, because everything shines through its radiance. Where there is no consciousness, there is no manifestation of any kind. Strictly speaking, pure consciousness can know of no absence, as there is nothing else besides it. The cognizing subject and the object alike are manifested through its radiance. It is through this light that the subject knows the object and the object becomes known to the subject. Every act of cognition is an expression of pure consciousness through a mental mode, hence the distinction between pure knowledge and empirical (modal) knowledge. The Advaitins call the first of the two kinds herein distinguished *svarūpa jñāna* and the second one *vṛtti jñāna*. The former is self-luminous, self-established, pure, and foundational.[22] The latter is subject to change and appears in relation to particular objects. The Advaitins hold that all objects—regardless of whether they are known or unknown—are in the long run objects of *sākṣin* (witness-consciousness).

Etymologically '*sākṣin*' means direct and immediate perception, better yet, it is that which directly or immediately perceives, the passive observer of perception, as opposed to a doer. It refers to a witness in the sense of the phenomenologically pure observer; the observer who observes without bringing anything to the observation. It signifies seeing without being the agent of an act. It is disinterested observer. In short, '*sākṣin*' is a kind of enduring, passive, and unchanging awareness that observes and reveals mental cognitions and physical objects as well as witnesses all changes and activities that take place due to the intellect. It signifies the self, which though not itself involved in the cognitive process, functions as a disinterested, uninvolved onlooker or witness-consciousness.[23]

Pure consciousness on account of being covered by the multiplicity of names and forms cannot associate itself with the objects of cognition. Instrumentality of the inner sense is required to establish its connection with the object. The Advaitins hold that the inner sense, located within

the body, is constituted of *sattva*, a very fine transparent matter; it is divided into three parts, so to speak. One part remains inside the body, the second part makes contact with several objects, and the third part resides between these two making the whole a unit. The interior part is the ego, the intervening part performs the cognitive action, and the part in contact with the empirical objects makes them manifest as objects of a cognitive act. Pure consciousness is reflected in the inner sense on account of the transparent *sattva* and according to the three parts of the inner sense, it is manifested in three different ways: as the cognizer, the cognitive operation, and the cognition. *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* states:

> Accordingly, consciousness is threefold: the consciousness conditioned by the content, the consciousness conditioned by the means of knowledge, and the consciousness conditioned by the cognizer. To speak of them individually, the consciousness conditioned by the pitcher is the consciousness conditioned by the content, the consciousness conditioned by a mode of the internal organ is the consciousness conditioned by the means of knowledge, and that conditioned by the internal organ is the consciousness conditioned by the cognizer.[24]

Thus, the Advaitins speak of the threefold stratification of consciousness: consciousness conditioned by[25] the object (*viṣayacaitanya*), consciousness conditioned by the means or instruments of right cognition (*pramāṇacaitanya*), and consciousness conditioned by the inner sense (*pramātṛcaitanya*). Consciousness conditioned by an object (say, a pitcher) is the object consciousness; consciousness conditioned by the means of knowledge is the cognitive consciousness; and consciousness conditioned by the inner sense is the cognizer consciousness (*pramātṛcaitanya*). Thus, consciousness, although one, on account of these different activities within the inner sense, appears as many.

To preserve the integrity of their metaphysical theory that the only reality is the all-pervading differenceless consciousness, in their account of perception, the Advaitins develop an identity theory, according to which in a perceptual cognition, the subject and the object achieve an identity.[26] They argue that the subject of cognition is the same consciousness as conditioned by the cognitive mechanisms belonging to the empirical percipient, just as the object of cognition is also the same consciousness as conditioned by what we regard as the external thing. Within this general framework, the Advaita Vedānta introduces the notion of a modification of the inner sense, *vṛtti*, whose function is to remove the veil of ignorance that conceals the thing to be known.

Although in all cognition, the object is manifested by consciousness in its role as the witness-consciousness, external things are not directly manifested by the witness-consciousness. An appropriate modification of the inner sense intervenes. However, a mental mode being inert cannot by itself illuminate objects. It leads to illumination on account of its association with pure consciousness.

Thus, in the perception of an external object, the object is cognized via its association with the subject-consciousness. *Antaḥkaraṇavṛtti*, a mode of the inner sense, effects such an association. In perceptual cognition, the inner sense assumes the form of the object[27] resulting in an identity between the consciousness conditioned by the subjective cognitive mechanism and the consciousness conditioned by the object that is known; this identity, they argue, is the perceptual cognition.

The Advaitins provide a picturesque description of the process of perception against the setting of the identity of consciousness:

> Just as the water of a tank, having come out of an aperture, enters a number of fields through channels assuming like those [fields] a quadrangular or any other form, so also the internal organ, which is characterized by light, goes out [of the body] through the door [sense] of sight, and so on, and [after] reaching the location of the object, say, a pitcher, it is modified in the form of the object like a pitcher. This modification [of the internal organ] is called a mental mode (*vṛtti*). In the case of inferential cognition, and so on, however, there is no going out of the internal organ to the location of fire, because fire, and so on [other inferred objects], are not in contact with the sense of sight, and so on [other sense organs].
>
> Thus in the case of the perceptual cognitions such as 'this is a pitcher', because the consciousness conditioned by the pitcher and the consciousness conditioned by the mental mode in the form of a pitcher are located in one and the same place [outside the body], the consciousness conditioned by both [the object perceived and the *vṛtti*] is one. This is because the modification of the internal organ and the object like pitchers, although having the capacity of differentiation [between the consciousness conditioned by the *vṛtti* and the consciousness conditioned by the object], do not give rise to any difference on account of their being located in one and the same place [where the object exists]. For this very reason, ether conditioned by a pitcher in a monastery is not different from the ether conditioned by a hall in the monastery [inspite of being two distinct limiting adjuncts].[28]

To be specific, the cognitive process of external visual perception contains the following five steps:

1. The inner sense comes in contact with the organ of vision, reaches out to the object and becomes non-different from it.
2. The mental mode removes the veil of nescience that had been hiding the object from the perceiver.
3. The consciousness underlying the object, being manifested as a result of the removal of the veil of ignorance reveals the object.
4. The mind effects an identity between the consciousness conditioned by the object and the consciousness conditioned by the subject.
5. As a result, the cognizer perceives the object.[29]

Thus, cognition of an object is not possible in the absence of the consciousness that underlies it.

It is important to keep in mind in this context that although the appropriate mental modification or the *vṛtti* manifests the object, the mental mode itself is directly manifested by the witness-consciousness:

> ... All modifications of the inner sense, being known by the witness-consciousness, are immediately apprehended ... .[30]

When consciousness is reflected in the mental mode, say, in the perception of a pitcher, there results a judgement, in the form 'this is a pitcher'. A second mental modification is not needed to know the initial modification. When I know an object, I also know that I know that object. The apprehension 'I know that I know the object', for the Advaitins, unlike the Naiyāyikas, is not revealed by the finite individual. It is apprehended by the witness-consciousness. It is important to note here that knowledge, for the Advaitins, is an event in time. When I apprehend an object, the object is not the only thing that is revealed. It is accompanied by an apprehension of apprehension. When I say this is a chair, I not only know the chair, but also know that I know that this is a chair. The two apprehensions occur simultaneously. 'This is a chair' is an instance of perception; however, the perception itself is apprehended by the witness-consciousness. Here, as noted earlier, the Advaitins differ from the Naiyāyikas, who argue that knowing is a temporal act directed towards an object. It is a property of the self and is expressed in judgements such as 'this is a chair'. Such cognitions reveal only the object; they do not reveal either the cognizer or the cognition itself. The '*vyavasāya*' or the primary cognition, for them, is revealed by a second introspective awareness in the form 'I know the chair', or 'I have the knowledge of

the chair'. The second cognition or the cognition of the primary cognition is called '*anuvyavasāya*'. Whereas the object of the primary cognition is the chair, the direct object of the second cognition is the primary cognition, the indirect objects being the self and the object of the primary cognition. The Advaitins argue that consciousness in itself being self-revealed and self-established, cannot become an object of another consciousness. Thus, there cannot be consciousness of consciousness or *vṛtti* of *vṛtti*. In other words, while consciousness does not directly manifest a thing in the world like a pitcher, and requires the mediation of an appropriate *vṛtti*, the *vṛtti* itself is manifested directly by consciousness without any other mediation. The reason for this contention lies deep in the Advaita theory of ignorance, which is not only an important part of its metaphysics but also of its epistemology. An empirical object such as a jar or a table, when it is not being known or perceived is covered up by ignorance which on the Advaita theory is a beginningless, positive entity, removable only by knowledge (*anādibhāvarūpatve sati jñānanivartyāvidyā*).[31] It is beginningless, because when one says 'I am ignorant', it does not make sense to ask when did your ignorance begin.[32] The Advaitins argue that *avidyā* is positive, although the prefix of the term '*avidyā*' (*a* + *vidyā*) creates the misleading impression that it is a negative entity, a mere absence of knowledge (*abhāvopādānam ajñānam*). They maintain that such statements as 'I do not know X (owing to the rule that knowledge of an absence presupposes knowledge of the counter positive of that absence)', do not testify to the absence of knowledge, because to know the absence of the knowledge of X, one must already have the knowledge of X—in which case there would be no absence of the knowledge of X. Therefore, what one perceives in 'I do not know X' is not the absence of the knowledge of X, but a positive ignorance concealing X. Additionally, the Advaitins take great pains to demonstrate that ignorance is positive in order to underscore the point that it is different from the non-being. The non-being is unreal; it does not have any objective counterpart. Ignorance, on the other hand, though false,[33] is not non-being; it is a fact of experience. They take ignorance to be the material cause of the phenomenal world; its positivity bestows a degree of reality to it, albeit only empirical.

The Advaitins' thesis is based on the belief that anything that does not possess unknown existence (*ajñātasattā*) is revealed by the *sākṣin* alone (*kevalasākṣībhāṣya*). Conversely, those objects that are capable of having the status of unknown existence (i.e., that can be concealed by ignorance), need the mediation of a mental mode in order to manifest.

Prior to its manifestation, an object, say, a pitcher, is unknown, insofar as it is concealed. A mental modification destroys the cover that conceals the object and makes it manifest. A pitcher, for example, may exist without being perceived. Therefore, a pitcher is known through a mode of the inner sense. Affective states, for example, pleasure and pain do not possess unknown existence; they last as long as they are revealed. One does not say, 'I am happy, but I do not know it.' Nor does one say, 'I am sad, but I do not know it.' One apprehends one's happiness directly, as long as it lasts. In other words, my happiness is revealed to me *only* as known but not as having had an unknown existence prior to being known. Thus, the Advaitins argue that the mental states, such as pleasure and pain, are apprehended by the witness-consciousness *alone*. Likewise, illusory objects do not possess unknown existence; they do not exist out there when they are not perceived. The essence of an illusory object consists in being perceived (*esse est percipi*). An illusory object is never hidden; thus the question of reavealing it by removing the veil of unknownness does not arise. The point that the Advaitins are trying to make is as follows: knowledge does not create the object; it simply manifests the object. Therefore, *pramāṇas* are needed to remove the veil that had been hiding the object. An illusory object is never covered; it does not enjoy unknown existence, so no *pramāṇa* is necessary for the revelation of an illusory object; there is no passage involved from a prior state of unknown existence to its subsequent knownness. Finally, the Advaitins argue that ignorance also does not exist as unknown. One does not say 'I am ignorant but I do not know that I am ignorant.' They argue that nescience is given to us in our experience; it is not, and cannot be, established by any *pramāṇa* (means of true cognition). In other words, it is *prasiddha*, not *pramāṇasiddha*. *Pramāṇas* give rise to empirical knowledge and make known what was previously unknown. 'Previously unknown', on the Advaita thesis amounts to saying that it was 'veiled by nescience'. Given that empirical knowledge in itself is the result of a mental modification, it is by its very nature opposed to nescience. Therefore, empirical knowledge gained through any of the *pramāṇas* does not, and cannot, reveal nescience; nescience is manifested directly by the witness-consciousness. In the state of deep sleep, though there is no I-consciousness, ignorance is directly experienced in the form 'I did not know anything'. This experience points to the knowledge 'I know that I did not know' which shows that nescience is established by the witness-consciousness.

Though the witness-consciousness establishes ignorance, it is a seer (*dṛṣṭā*); it is not a cognizer (*pramātā*). This explains why witness-knowledge is not regarded as 'true cognition' (*pramājñāna*). In this context, the Advaitin distinction between awareness and knowing must be noted. Whereas witness-knowledge is a kind of awareness, cognizer-knowledge is knownness of an object that was previously unknown. The witness-consciousness apprehends the object it establishes. However, the object it apprehends did not enjoy a prior unknown status. Thus, the Advaitins argue, witness-consciousness' knowledge is not opposed to ignorance. It is knowledge that is generated via the mental mode, that is, the modal knowledge that is opposed to ignorance. This also explains the difference between the object established by the witness-consciousness (*sākṣisiddhavastu*) and the object established by a means of true cognition (*pramāṇasiddhavastu*).

Empirical knowledge, in Advaita, must meet the following conditions. First, consciousness must be reflected in a mental mode, which has the form of the object being cognized; second, consciousness must apperceive what is given to the senses with the help of the intellect; and finally, consciousness must illuminate the object with the aid of the inner sense. Objects, irrespective of whether they are internal or external, cannot manifest on their own. They are concealed by ignorance prior to being known. To be an object of knowledge then requires that this concealment by ignorance be destroyed. The appropriate *vṛtti* achieves this job. And while the *vṛtti* does its job, the witness-consciousness manifests not only the *vṛtti*, but also its object. Hence the expression 'I know the jar' really expresses the fact that pure consciousness as limited by my inner sense manifests a *vṛtti* of the same inner sense while this *vṛtti* removes the concealment of its object, the jar.

A cognition, the Advaitins hold, is either direct or indirect. Whereas with respect to the witness-consciousness, cognition is always direct, with respect to the object, on the other hand, the cognition may be either direct or indirect. When the object is directly known, as in 'this is a pitcher', the knowledge of the pitcher is immediate. When the object is indirectly known, as when one infers 'the hill has fire because it possesses smoke', the knowledge of the fire is mediated by the perception of smoke. However, all knowledge, regardless of whether it is immediate or mediate, is the result of a mental mode. To know an object amounts to some sort of unveiling resulting in its revelation and this revelation is the goal of all epistemic endeavours.

While the distinction between pure consciousness and *vṛtti* is a clear distinction between two ontologically different categories, between the subject and an object, or between, as the Advaitins put it, *dṛṣṭā* and *dṛśya*, the distinction between pure consciousness and the witness-consciousness is not a distinction between two categories but between two different roles played by the same thing. The consciousness in itself and by itself is the *śuddhacaitanya*. Its only function, as pointed out earlier, is manifestation. But given certain metaphysical constraints such as the occurrence of mental modes or *vṛttis* (cognitive and pleasure and pain as affective) in a person's psychophysical life, of illusory objects, and the beginningless *avidyā* or ignorance which conceals the true nature of things, the same pure consciousness plays the role of the witness-consciousness, which immediately, that is to say, without further mediation of a *vṛtti*, manifests all these, namely, the cognitive and affective mental modes (*vṛttis*), illusory objects, and beginningless positive ignorance. What the Advaitins mean thereby is that when I say 'I am ignorant of such and such object', my ignorance having its locus in my consciousness as its object, the such and such object, is directly manifested by the witness-consciousness as belonging to me. Likewise, in my judgements 'I am perceiving', 'I am knowing that jar', 'I am happy', 'I am in pain', such objects as a *vṛtti*, a pleasure, and a pain, in order to be manifested, do not need any further *vṛtti*, because their being is never concealed by *avidyā*; by their very existence they stand unconcealed before the witness-consciousness. In the absence of the witness-consciousness there will be no way to apprehend cognitions. The Advaitins hold that a cognition cannot be said to be apprehended by introspection, because in that case we would require a second cognition to reveal the original cognition, and a third cognition to reveal the second one, and so on—an infinite regress of cognitions. Thus this eternal, ubiquitous and self-manifesting witness-consciousness simultaneously establishes all objects. So, Vivaraṇa states: 'Everything is an object of the witness-consciousness, either as known or as unknown.'[34] It is the starting point of all ontological and epistemological inquiries, and thus serves as the basis of all knowledge. It is the basic presupposition of all knowledge; it is the necessary condition for the very possibility of judgements such as 'I know' and 'I do not know'. In sum, it is the same identical consciousness which metaphysically is the nature of ātman–brahman, and epistemologically makes all manifestations, and so knowledge, possible, but which, in a special epistemological context, plays the role of witness-consciousness. Pure consciousness does not need any proof;

it is self-certifying. It is immediate. It is the only reality; it is one without a second.

V

The Advaita Vedānta thesis that consciousness is the only reality is more easily said than understood. In trying to understand it, it has to be taken together with several other connected theses that the Advaita Vedānta asserts:

1. All this is brahman (*sarvam idaṃ khalu brahma*) and so consciousness;[35]
2. none of this is brahman (brahman is not this, not this);[36]
3. the world is a superimposition on consciousness;
4. the material cause of the world is *avidyā* (ignorance), which, in this role, is the same as the *prakṛti* of Sāṃkhya; and
5. the world is a real transformation of *avidyā* and an apparent transformation of the brahman, which the Advaitins arrive at by combining 3 and 4.

The Advaita thesis that the brahman as consciousness is everywhere, that it enters into all entities whatsoever, that it is the innermost nature of all things, can be understood only if we understand all the above five propositions conjointly.

When one asks what is the stuff of which things are made and proceeds to give an answer in terms of familiar metaphysical positions, for example, materialism or atomism, one is asking a particular kind of question—one is looking for the stuff in a particular sense. In this sense of the stuff, the Advaita answer is: that stuff is *prakṛti* or *avidyā*. So far the Advaita school agrees with the Sāṃkhya system and differs from the Vaiśeṣika school. But there is another sense in which the stuff of all things according to Advaita is nothing other than the brahman. In this sense, to say that the stuff of all things is the brahman, is to say that the truth or reality underlying all things is the brahman. The Advaita asserts both the above theses. When the Advaitins assert that the things of the world, for example, tables, chairs, rocks, etc., are products of ignorance, they are not saying that, like the illusory snake, these empirically real things magically, totally inexplicably, appear owing to our ignorance of the brahman. The Advaita thesis is more substantial than this. In holding

that the world is due to ignorance, they are asserting that all empirical things of the world, in fact the empirical world itself, may be explained scientifically as progressive transformation of *prakṛti* which, for Advaita, is also the original *avidyā*. The Advaitins further add that this *avidyā* or *prakṛti* is superimposed upon the brahman, its *āśraya* and *viṣaya* are both the brahman.[37] Consequently, in this context, the Advaitins advance two kinds of explanations conjointly: according to the first one, the world is to be explained as the transformation of *avidyā*; according to the second, as the false appearance of the brahman.[38]

The Advaita thesis that everything is consciousness, that it is the stuff of all things, should not be construed to mean that the things consist neither of atoms nor molecules, nor of the three *guṇas* of which the Sāṃkhya *prakṛti* is constituted, but of consciousness, because consciousness is not the kind of thing that we can figure as constituent of things on par with atoms or *guṇas*. What Advaitins mean is that any worldly thing, or the world itself, for the explanation of its appearance, requires not only positing the *mūlāvidyā* of which it is a modification, but also the pure self-shining consciousness on which this *avidyā* is superimposed and but for which this *avidyā* itself would not be possible. In this sense, consciousness is the foundation, the basis of all things, in the absence of which nothing could be there for nothing would be manifested.

Against the Advaita position outlined above, one may raise the following objection: the account seems to confuse between epistemology and metaphysics. The view that the empirical world is a real transformation of *prakṛti* is a metaphysical thesis. However, the thesis that *avidyā* or *prakṛti* depends on pure consciousness for its manifestation (in the sense that but for consciousness *avidyā* itself would not be known) is an epistemological thesis. So the conclusion that the empirical world is an apparent transfor-mation of the brahman is partly metaphysical and partly epistemological. As a matter of fact, when the Advaitins contend that the locus or the *āśraya* of *avidyā* is the brahman, they seem to be asserting a metaphysical thesis. But when they immediately justify it by saying that *avidyā* would not have been known (as in the judgement 'I am ignorant') but for consciousness, that is an epistemological thesis, not pertaining to the being of *avidyā*, but pertaining to the manifestation of the knowledge of *avidyā*.

The objection really brings out the innermost nature of the Advaita thesis. On the Advaita view, being and consciousness are one, such that the ultimate condition of the possibility of knowledge is also the ultimate

being. To say that *sat* and the *cit* are identical is to concede that metaphysics and epistemology, in the final analysis, cannot be separated. In simultaneously holding that all entities have their being in consciousness and that all entities derive their manifestation from the self-manifesting consciousness, the Advaitins are not making two separate and independent theses; the two are really identical. The above objection, therefore, is not really an objection against the Advaita position; it rather brings out the real nature of the Advaita position.

There is also another aspect of this convergence of metaphysics and epistemology that must be pointed out. In the case of empirical objects in the world, 'to be' or 'to exist' and 'to be known' do not coincide. In other words, empirical things may exist; however, they may exist as unknown. Therefore, epistemology and metaphysics do not coincide. But in the case of *avidyā*, 'to be' and 'to be known' coincide such that ignorance does not have unknown existence; it *only* exists as known. So at this level epistemology and metaphysics coincide. The being of ignorance is also what makes its manifestation possible; this being is nothing else than pure consciousness.

Have we then understood the Advaita thesis that consciousness is all-pervading (*sarva vyāpī*), the inner truth of all things, the stuff of which all things are made, etc. In answer, I shall reiterate what I have stated earlier: in order to understand the Advaitin thesis of consciousness, one must understand conjointly the five theses outlined at the outset of this section. The Advaitins will contend that in the long run one truly understands this thesis only when one has an immediate experience (*aprokṣa anubhūti*) of the presence of the self in all beings and of all beings in the self. It is true that some such intuitive experience, or at least the possibility of some such experience, is what the Advaita philosophical thesis articulates. But when one holds that one truly understands that thesis only when one has that experience, one makes it impossible for most of us to understand it. I would rather maintain that the two supplement each other. The philosophical position claims to give a plausible, conceptual interpretation of the experience, and in the supposed experience the philosophical position is verified and confirmed.

We are still trying to make sense of the Advaita position that everything is consciousness. It may be claimed that this position is no better or no worse off than the materialist thesis that all is matter. Let us pause briefly to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of the materialist position. Irrespective of whether we take the thesis that such

things of the world as trees, mountains, jars, stones, are made of matter as true or false, the thesis certainly makes sense. These are the cases which a materialist, when he advances inferences in support of his position, can cite as supporting examples (*dṛṣṭānta*) to substantiate his own position; he can argue that 'everything is made of material elements because it is made of joining together of parts, just as pitcher, etc.'. But the weakness of the materialist position becomes obvious when one extends it to such things as consciousness, knowledge, desires, efforts, and so on. It does not intuitively make sense to say that these things are made of material elements (atoms, molecules). In order to make some sense of it, the materialist has to argue that consciousness, knowledge, and so on, are only epiphenomena or apparent products of matter. Now, consider the Advaita position. The Advaita thesis that everything is made of consciousness makes sense of one's inner life, of one's self, one's awareness, cognitions, pleasure, pain, desire, etc. But the thesis loses its initial plausibility when confronted with sundry material objects such as trees, chairs, etc., and not unlike the materialist, it has only one recourse open at its disposal, namely, to demonstrate that the material things of the world are but apparent transformations of that consciousness. This shows to what extent the two philosophical theses, of the Advaitins and the materialists, confront not only the same kind of problem, but also that they attempt to meet the problem in similar ways. In what respect then is the Advaita position better off?

In this context, keeping in mind an important difference between materialism and Advaita Vedānta might provide further insights into the question under consideration. Although a materialist regards consciousness as an epiphenomenon or a mere appearance, he has, in his ontology, no place for such a category (epiphenomenon or mere appearance). In a materialist world-view there are only physical entities but no appearances, because a physical object appears only to a conscious being. If there are no appearances, there are no mere appearances. However, for an Advaitin, the reality may appear to be what it is not. It is not that an Advaitin does not face a problem here, because the Advaitin must explain the question, to which consciousness the mere appearances are presented. And since the finite human consciousness is not the pure consciousness, which alone is real, the finite consciousness must be an appearance. But an appearance to whom? We know that in order to answer this kind of question, the Advaitin takes recourse to the concept of *avidyā* and the concept of the witness-consciousness. But the materialist, in order to account for mere appearance or epiphenomenon,

cannot appeal to any such concept. Thus, while initially it seemed as though the materialist and the Advaitin have equally difficult problems, the Advaitin is better of because he/she can give an explanation of reality appearing to be what it is not, while the materialist has no such explanatory concepts available to him/her.

The comparison shows that a grand monistic philosophy which admits only of one kind of reality, irrespective of whether it is the matter or the spirit, faces the most difficult task of explaining even the appearance of dualism. But a dualistic philosophy that recognizes both consciousness and matter as real has no such problem because it does not have to account for the phenomenon of monism. In other words, a monism hidden behind phenomena is not itself borne out by the data of experience. So a dualistic philosophy is under no constraint to explain monism. A monistic philosophy, on the other hand, is under the constraint to explain why matter and spirit are presented to be two distinct and different realities. This is not to suggest that dualism has no problems. The problem of dualism lies elsewhere. It has to provide a plausible account of how the two orders of realities, matter and spirit, are related. How is it that if there are two distinct orders of reality that consciousness is exhibited in only a certain bodily form and also why is it that bodily changes affect, even may eliminate, consciousness? To say that material processes produce, cause, or bring about consciousness is only to assert that there is a causal relation between the two but not to explain how a causal relation between so different orders is possible. We understand how molecular motion causes heat or temperature to rise, but we do not understand how bodily changes can either change or even destroy consciousness, nor do we understand how conscious states such as anxiety may cause ulcer in one's stomach. We do not understand how such causal relations are possible on the dualistic basis. The materialist can make it intelligible, though within limits, for he/she cannot, as I have stated earlier, make sense of how material processes cause *mere* appearances. The other kind of monism—spiritual monism, the kind one finds in Advaita—can, in principle, explain how bodily processes bring about mental states, for both bodily processes and mental states on this account are products of *prakṛti*, but the Advaita still has to tell us how a mental state appears to be a state of consciousness and for this the Vedāntin again appeals to the concepts of *avidyā* and the witness-consciousness.

In the preceding paragraphs, I have examined the relative merits and demerits of the rival monistic and dualistic theories. Monism has

greater theoretical appeal because of its simplicity, and if, as argued before, spiritualistic monism of Advaita Vedānta is better off than the materialistic monism, the Advaita Vedānta as a philosophical system is even stronger: What materialism claims on its behalf is its seeming closeness to the natural sciences. But the materialists' claim that the natural sciences themselves are materialistic is highly questionable. Materialism is one familiar interpretation of the natural sciences. The other interpretation, more in consonance with Advaita, is possible and also available. But that is a task I do not plan to undertake here.

VI

Discussing the following questions may bring out further aspects of the Advaita theory of consciousness: What is meant by consciousness as self-luminous (*svayaṃprakāśa*)? Does it have a form (*ākāra*)? Is it of an object (*saviṣaya*) or without an object (*nirviṣaya*)? Why does the self-shining and the differenceless consciousness appear to be many and infected with differences?

We have already seen that the Advaitins agree with the Buddhist position that consciousness is *svayaṃprakāśa* (self-shining).[39] The Buddhist theory makes each specific cognitive event self-shining; in other words, the event shows itself. However, on the Advaita account, these determinate or specific cognitions, for example, the visual perception of a table, are not in themselves self-manifesting. They hold that each such cognitive occurrence or *vṛtti* is directly presented to the witness-consciousness without requiring the mediation of another *vṛtti*. Thus, to say that a cognition is self-manifesting, amounts to saying that a cognition is *kevalasākṣibhāsya*, that is, it is apprehended by the witness-consciousness alone, which is self-manifesting and does not require another witness-consciousness to manifest it. It is important to remember that the Buddhists do not have a concept of witness-consciousness; there is no witness of the cognitive events of consciousness. Each such event is literally self-aware, i.e., aware of itself.

The major difference between the Buddhist and the Advaita Vedānta understanding of consciousness lies in their answers to the following questions: Does consciousness have an *ākāra*? Or, is it *nirākāra*? As stated earlier, on the Buddhist account, consciousness is *sālāra*, it possesses a form. The Advaitins, however, severely criticize this theory and argue that consciousness has no form, no content; its only function,

like that of light, is to show the object on which it is focused. In this regard, the Advaitins side with the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā philosophers. The Advaitins argue that, that which manifests everything cannot have the form of any particular thing; manifestation is its only function. However, it is important to note in this context that in a very peculiar way the Advaitins do accommodate the *sākāra* theory within their scheme, because on their account, though consciousness has no *form*, the *vṛttis* do assume the form of the object. Thus, the *vṛtti* of the Advaitin is the *vijñāna* of the Buddhists except that they make each *vṛtti svasaṃvedana*, whereas the *vṛtti* in itself is not self-luminous on the Advaita account.

The final question that concerns theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy is whether consciousness is intrinsically intentional or *saviṣyaka*. The Advaita view on this matter is clear and sharply opposed to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā views. It regards consciousness as non-intentional; the Advaitins argue that consciousness only appears to be intentional on account of the reflection of the *sākāra vṛtti* in it or vice versa. The *vṛtti*, however, has the intentional structure of the Buddhist *vijñāna* inasmuch as it has a content, which is the form of the object. So it would seem that the Advaita theory of consciousness has been able to accommodate the two competing theories by assigning to them two different levels of discourse. Pure consciousness or *śuddhacaitanya* has no intentionality. The *vṛttis* have an intentional structure, which they owe to the causal influence of the object and the inner sense. The intentional structure and the causal story coalesce.

Additionally, the Advaita Vedānta theory of consciousness must confront the following major difficulty: granting that consciousness is one, self-shining and differenceless, why does it appear to be many and infected with differences? The simple Advaita Vedānta answer, as is well known, is that it is due to ignorance. But this answer, while it may or may not be finally satisfactory, becomes a source of more puzzles than it solves. The first question, which is almost unavoidable, is what is the relation between the self-revealing consciousness and ignorance?

The Advaita response to this question may be developed in several steps. First, like every other thing, ignorance is an object of consciousness in the sense that it is manifested by the witness-consciousness as expressed in the judgement 'I am ignorant'. Second, consciousness does not remove ignorance, since consciousness manifests it. It is not opposed to ignorance, for if it were, there could be no consciousness of ignorance. What opposes ignorance and so destroys it, as we have seen, is

knowledge in the sense of a true cognition (*pramā*) of the nature of the thing. From all this it follows that on the Advaita view the ultimate locus of ignorance is consciousness, its being depends on consciousness; without consciousness, as just stated, ignorance would not be manifested, and so would be reduced to nothing. At the same time, the Advaita points out consciousness is also the object of ignorance. Ignorance conceals an object (that is to say, the object of which I am ignorant) only by concealing the consciousness which would have manifested that object. Since objects are not self-manifesting, it would be utterly futile to conceal them. It is only by concealing the source of its manifestation that the object can be shut out from the view. In the Advaita technical language, what is concealed is not the pitcher, but the consciousness as limited by the pitcher (*ghatāvacchinacaitanya*). So we arrive at a very paradoxical situation with regard to the relation between consciousness and ignorance. Consciousness is both the locus and the object of ignorance. Being the locus, consciousness supports the very being of ignorance. Trying to conceal that very support, ignorance does not and cannot succeed in the (concealing) project. For if consciousness were wholly concealed by ignorance, nothing could be manifested, everything would be in the dark, and there would be no awareness of ignorance itself. Thus, while ignorance seeks to conceal consciousness, consciousness manifests that ignorance in that very act of concealing it, analogously to the manner in which *Rāhu*, the demon, is known, manifested, seen, not per se, but only in the act of swallowing up the moon. For the Advaita Vedānta there is no incompati-bility between consciousness being the foundation of everything and ignorance concealing its nature and making it appear to be what it is not.

I hope it is obvious to my readers by now that the Advaita account is very different from the Buddhist account. We have already seen that the Buddhists in their theory fuse nature and consciousness together. The Advaitins, on the other hand, argue that the nature or *prakṛti* consisting of the three *guṇas* is a product of *avidyā* or ignorance. While resting on, that is to say, being manifested by consciousness, nature per se is other than consciousness. In the Advaita scheme of things, there is no visual consciousness, no tactual consciousness as such. It only appears to be visual or tactual, when it is limited by the inner sense and the sense organs. Consciousness pervades all things but is not touched by any of them. If the Advaita metaphysics is true, then there is consciousness in stones, mountains, rivers, plants, trees, and animals and humans without undergoing any corresponding transformation. So the metaphysics is

not pan-psychism, as the Buddhist position seems to be, and the Jaina position seems more explicitly to be. This externality of the relation between consciousness and nature precisely undercuts the ability of Advaita theory to generate a philosophy of science. It leaves science to nature for whose internal structure consciousness has nothing to contribute. What it contributes is the abstract possibility of manifestation. There are philosophers of science today who look forward to Vedānta as providing a good philosophy of physics so that consciousness instead of being the product of matter would be regarded as the original stuff of which all things are made. But how can it be so, if consciousness is reduced to a mere principle of manifestation and all creative energy is handed over to *avidyā*? Is it possible that consciousness has two essential natures: manifestation (*prakāśa*) and creative energy (*śakti*)? But that would mean that the *avidyā* would be blended with the founding consciousness more intimately than the Advaita scheme would allow. Can it (*avidyā*) be the creative aspect of consciousness?

In modern times, we find this form of Advaita in the thought of Śrī Aurobindo. But in this respect Aurobindo was preceded by Kāshmīr Śaivism, especially of the Abhinavagupta variety. The essence of his theory is that consciousness is not only *cit* but also *cit-śakti*, this *cit-śakti* exercises its creative function through time such that *kāla* is an aspect of *cit-śakti*. One finds there the concept of descent of consciousness through a series of manifestations, many different levels of both *cit* and time.

I hope it is obvious to my readers by now that as compared with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā, whose theories I have characterized as an objectivist theory and the Yogācāra Buddhist's subjective–objective theory, the Advaita Vedānta theory becomes truly transcendental subjectivism. *Cit* is not a worldly entity but constitutes the basis and the conditions of the possibility of all mundane experience, and in that sense is transcendental. If all experience requires the split between the subject and the object, the dualism between consciousness and the world, the knower and the known, then a pure, differenceless consciousness would seem to transcend experience, so that consciousness in its purity would seem to be, besides being transcendental, also transcendent. But this last characterization is to be understood with a certain limitation. Consciousness is not an entity, like God, the assumed creator of the world, inhabiting some remote space transcending the world. But strictly speaking, consciousness is immanent in all experience. The best I can do to express this point is by recalling a famous remark ascribed to the Advaitins, that whenever and wherever something exists (*asti*), something

appears (*bhāti*) and something pleases (*rocati*), those three functions precisely are, in their unity, pure consciousness, ātman or the brahman. What we need is to abstract the three aspects from their objective contents, in other words, from that which is said to exist, to appear, and to please until we are left with the mere functions of existing, appearing, and pleasing, i.e., consciousness. But again it would be a mistake to say that consciousness has three aspects, because that would amount to introducing into the consciousness a structure of differences which Advaita consistently excludes from consciousness. So the words '*sat*', '*cit*', and '*ānanda*' must not be construed in Advaita to designate different aspects or properties of one and the same thing but that these three words by a semantic process of dropping their primary meanings are to be understood as exercising a secondary meaning function, i.e., *lakṣaṇa*, to exclude what is non-existent, what is *acit*, what is pain and suffering from the nature of pure consciousness. So although there are three different functions of exclusion, of the words '*sat*', '*cit*', and '*ānanda*', the primary designatum is *śuddhacaitanya*; the *cit* simply is.

VII

Why is it held by the Advaitins that consciousness, in its own nature, is blissful? They describe consciousness in such language as *ānandasvarūpa*, *ānandaghana*, etc. In order to understand this conception of consciousness, we have to go through several steps. The thesis is, no doubt, unique and strange. Though such experiences as uninterrupted and non-objectifiable bliss are intelligible, one still has to understand why one should locate such experiences in the very nature of consciousness, instead of saying that in these cases one is conscious of bliss.

Let us first distinguish between pleasure (*sukha*), happiness, and bliss (*ānanda*). Pleasure, which is always contrasted with pain, is marked by a sensuous, in the language of phenomenology, 'hyletic' content; it is produced by causes and is never permanent or everlasting. It arises and perishes, and is, therefore, also relative to the context. Clearly, pleasure is an object of consciousness, so also is pain. Therefore, neither pleasure nor pain could belong to the nature of consciousness. Even if pleasure is sensuous and does not belong to *cit*, one could argue that *cit* from an empirical perspective has some partiality, to state it metaphorically, towards pleasure, and against pain. It is not incorrect to

say that consciousness does not wish pain upon itself. It rejects pain, and in an attempt to get rid of it, treats it as an 'intrusive other'. The phenomenologists argue that pain is characterized by what they call 'alterity' (a stranger, an unwarranted other), and consciousness cannot make sense of it. Pleasure, on the other hand, is accepted or welcomed; one does not wish it to cease; rather, at the moment of pleasure, one wishes it to be permanent. But pleasure also soon shows itself to be an other. If prolonged, without internal variation, it becomes boring, and consciousness rejects it. That alone could belong to the nature of consciousness, which could never be rejected, with which consciousness would be perpetually satisfied without ever being bored. So a continuous uninterrupted consciousness of pleasure not only is inconceivable; perhaps it is logically impossible. Given that pleasure is always pleasure of or in something—this something is a determinate something—a food, a drink, which removes a felt want such as hunger or thirst. So even if one's life is a life of pleasure, it must be a life of pleasures, each succeeded by another, none everlasting. But as Gautama Buddha said, a lesser pleasure, as contrasted with a greater pleasure that might have been is painful; a pleasure, when it is no more without being boring, is painful, so that it would seem that pain lurks in the interstices of pleasure. The two go together; if one of them is rejected at the beginning, the other eventually also becomes, if not a stranger, still a boring companion.

So much for pleasure. Is happiness intrinsic to consciousness? How is happiness to be distinguished from pleasure? Pleasure is an intentional state and is always associated with an object and a felt want; happiness seems to be without a specific object, such as food or drink, that is, as not filling a specific want. Perhaps, more appropriately, it may be regarded as a second-order state, which under certain conditions supervenes upon the first-order pleasures and pains. It would be wrong to suppose that a happy man only has pleasures and no pains. Happiness must be a state, not of uninterrupted pleasure, nor of total absence of pain (both of which are impossible), but a state of enduring satisfaction with the way things are, without any desire to change them radically (such that the first-level pleasures and pains are accepted and interpreted as contributing to a larger harmony of the whole of life). A state of unhappiness is one in which this harmony is broken down, disturbed, and so requires to be readjusted. Is happiness in this sense intrinsic to consciousness?

Again, one might argue that it is not. The idea of happiness entails that a person has a certain conception of her life in relation to others, a

view of where she is going (purpose), and how things fit into that scheme of things. It (happiness) has no absolute criterion. What makes a Confucian or a Taoist happy is different from what would make a devout Christian or a Vedāntin happy. What is needed is a conception of one's self in relation to others and the world, so that one can make one's first-order pleasures and pains fit in. But this total conception of a harmonious order would differ from culture to culture. It cannot, therefore, belong to the nature of consciousness, that is, to consciousness in itself.

The Advaita Vedāntins, however, claim that left to itself, consciousness is characterized by *ānanda* or bliss. Among Indian schools Advaita Vedānta alone holds such a view. The view seems to be intelligible because one construes *ānanda* as an uninterrupted state of pleasure (which I have argued is impossible, *anavacchinnasukhapravāha*). People also take it to be intelligible because they construe it as a state of happiness. However, the concept of happiness, as we just saw, applies only to concrete persons in their relationship to others and the world. What then is the meaning of *ānanda*?

In order to make some progress in answering the above question, let me develop some arguments one of which is explicitly stated in the Advaita literature but others are implicitly contained. The explicit argument is based upon a certain reading of the distinction between the four states of the self, the waking, the dreaming, the dreamless sleep, and the *turīya*.[40] The argument rests on the interpretation of dreamless sleep. Upon waking up from the dreamless sleep, one recalls, on the one hand, that one slept well and, on the other, that one did not know anything. These two together imply that the state of well-being, which one recalls, is independent of any objective knowledge. It is not pleasure in anything in particular. During this state, we are told, consciousness rests alone in and by itself, and so if it has an experience of well-being that only shows that this well-being is intrinsic to consciousness. This argument of course has another step, which I have omitted so far, namely, that these two judgements are memory judgements, not experiences. Those who reject the Advaita theory of consciousness construe these judgements as inferences, although the exact formulations of these inferences are very difficult to state.

Leaving the dreamless sleep argument aside for the present purpose, let me develop one of the implicit arguments. The argument would be something like this: consciousness in our ordinary worldly experience is always attached to or directed towards some object or the other, it is also individuated by being located in some body or the other. Pleasure and

pain, as well as happiness or unhappiness, pertain to this individualized consciousness and are due to this objective intentionality. With regard to objects, there are three interrelated intentionalities: knowledge, desire, and action. Knowledge of a thing gives rise to the desire to possess it, and the desire to possess it gives rise to action towards that goal. Each one of these, however, is subject to disappointment. Knowledge may fail to attain the truth; desire may either be frustrated, or even if fulfilled may bring new desires, and eventually pain. Action likewise may fail to reach its object for various obvious reasons. So it would seem that the possibilities of frustrations and disappointments are intrinsic to the intentionalities of empirical or worldly consciousness. Pleasure and pain always seem to go together. Happiness arises from harmoniously coordinating one's beliefs, desires, and actions but nothing can assure that such harmony will not be interrupted. The only prospect of escaping from such dismal possibilities is to withdraw from all objective intentionalities, so that consciousness is made to rest in and by itself. If that is possible, in that state there would be a state of well-being with no possibility of disappointment or frustration. Why not call it a state of bliss?

But this withdrawal from objective intentionality cannot be a simple one-step accomplishment. One can imagine a series of steps through which one progressively withdraws from all externality, into the interiority of one's being, the end point of the process being consciousness fully coinciding with itself, *ānanda*. The Upaniṣadic account of the different *koṣas*, which like onion skin have to be peeled off successively until one reaches the innermost core of *ānanda*, suggests this process. It is not, however, clear why or in what sense the goal, should one reach it, be a state of bliss. There are several other possibilities that we have to consider. In the first place, the fully self-coincident consciousness may be one of total indifference (*udāsina*). Or, it may be one of complete freedom. Or, it may be a state of enjoyment in which the self freely gives itself to the other. Let us consider these three possibilities.

A consciousness that is in a state of indifference is still indifferent towards the world and the others. It is like the phenomenologist's neutralization of the mundane attitudes. It leaves the world and the others where they were, does not alter their status, but withdraws from them into its own interiority as if out of disgust, possibility of frustration, and even out of a fear of contamination. Thus it seems that indifferent consciousness is still attached to the world, only negatively.

The second possibility, namely, that consciousness becomes free when it returns to be in and by itself, is of course a part of the Advaitic

wisdom. One way of understanding this could be the following. Intentionality in general is consciousness defining itself in terms of something in the world. It is either a visual consciousness or a tactual consciousness, a consciousness of seeing, or of hearing, or of thinking. In this way, intentional consciousness is attached to the world and becomes a worldly phenomenon. But at the same time, this consciousness also has an aspect in which it stands apart from that worldly involvement and can contemplate the latter as a possible object. My consciousness is not only a visual perception of the things out there, but it is also an awareness of so perceiving of that perception. In that case every consciousness is two-tiered: there is the intentional consciousness and there is the non-intentional awareness. The former may metaphorically be described as a state of bondage, the latter as freedom. But this freedom, within the context of the mundane life, is always experienced as a dimension of that bondage. In other words, the awareness, which accompanies intentionality, is like a halo radiating from intentionality. It is this which prevents consciousness from becoming a completely objective phenomenon. So, we can perhaps say that every intentional involvement with the world is also at the same time a non-intentional standing apart from it. Can this standing apart signify the promise and the possibility of that freedom which would be a state of *ānanda*, when all intentional involvement in the world is snapped? But, here again, we may raise the following sceptical question. What promises us, according to the above account, the possibility of freedom is consciousness's standing apart from intentional involvement at the same time when it is so involved. Thus it would seem that this freedom is always a freedom *from* something, which at the same time threatens to overpower it. If that is so, this freedom cannot cease to be a freedom from something, and if it is destined to be a freedom from something, it is destined to be an accompaniment of intentionality. In that case, the conception of freedom that I arrive at is not to be construed as freedom from intentionality, but it is a freedom which accompanies intentionality and gets its content from the intentionality which it perpetually transcends; however it still falls short of what the Advaitins promise. One way of avoiding this conclusion is to follow the path laid down by K.C. Bhattacharyya in *The Subject as Freedom.* Bhattacharyya argues that intentionality itself is not involvement with the world but the dissociation or standing apart from it. According to my account given above, the dissociation or standing apart accompanies intentionality as if it were a halo subtended by intentionality. According to K.C. Bhattacharyya's own

account, intentionality itself is dissociation from its object.[41] I would prefer, instead of this, an account according to which both—a movement towards the object and a movement away from it towards consciousness—are parallel movements accompanying each other.

Is there any better prospect for the third possibility where consciousness is related to an object in such a way that in that object it finds itself and reciprocally that object while remaining an other loses its otherness to consciousness. The reciprocal finding of oneself in the other and the other in oneself—the persistence of the otherness in the midst of the experience of self-identity, the overflowing of consciousness from the bounds of oneself into the other, and from the other into oneself—seems to be a description of the experience of loving, of the abolition of boundaries that divide two consciousnesses, in which the two bodies, while still attaching to the consciousnesses, cease to be limiting adjuncts and function as a means of opening out to each other, so that consciousness seems to have achieved victory over mundane intentionality and becomes a transcendental power. Sexual relation illustrates this; however, the concept of sexuality is too restricted to fully articulate it. Could this experience hold the promise of yielding a better insight into what it might mean by saying consciousness is *ānanda*?

In order to be able to yield that insight the loving relation must not be a mere state of pleasure which it always runs the risk of becoming; it must not be a mere state of happiness which is so much culturally dependent; it must be an ontological state, that is, a state of being where difference is preserved by transcending into the unity of existence. Again, this state of being is always under the threat of mundanity, of becoming a state of the body, and an event in the world, in which case the indifferent consciousness would still mock at it as it would everything worldly. The crucial question is whether sexual union can be raised from the mundane to a transcendental power, as in the mythological accounts of Kṛṣṇa's erotic play with Rādhā.

This account of consciousness as *ānanda* cannot be satisfactory for one primary reason that love, especially construed as sexual experience between the lover and the beloved, is subject to time and change; it does not last forever. The two consciousnesses are mortal, and even if a lifetime is spent in the loving consciousness, it does not endure; it can be preserved only in the hope of life hereafter. In other words, death threatens this loving consciousness.

Consciousness can be either cognitive or affective or volitional. For most Indian philosophers, consciousness is cognitive. It manifests, shows,

makes known, and reveals, excepting in the Vaiṣṇava schools of *bhakti*, consciousness is not construed as affective. Enjoyment and suffering, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, are relegated to the status of accidental and transitory fortunes. Is there any mode of consciousness which is intrinsically one of enjoyment? For the philosophers of *bhakti*, who do not regard the world and the selves as appearances, consciousness is intrinsically related to others in modes of loving and attachment, as the consciousness of the beloved to the lover, consciousness of a friend to a friend, of a servant to the master, of a child to the father or mother, and so on. These and other *rasas* (feeling essences) are intrinsic to consciousness according to the classical *rasa* theory; these *rasas* are eight in number. Abhinavagupta added one additional to the list, the *sāntarasa*. The idea seems to be that there is a state in the development of one's emotional life when these various *rasas* enter into a state of peace. Thus in the highest, deepest, and most enduring aesthetic experience—in watching a drama or enjoying a work of art or in reflecting on a loving experience—consciousness attains this state of peace where contrary and contradictory first-level emotions are resolved resulting in the establishment of a state of harmony between the enjoying consciousness and its other, whatever that other may be. It is, therefore, possible to hold that the highest and the deepest level of consciousness is achieved in aesthetic experience and that is a state of *ānanda*. It is more common to hold, however, that the highest and the deepest level of consciousness is achieved in mystic experience or *turīya*. But not all of us know what is a mystic experience. One feature of mystic experience, whatever else it might be, is that the subject–object dualism is transcended in it. But this transcendence may be accomplished in three different ways: an affective, a volitional, and a cognitive way. The first is the aesthetic consciousness in which the object of art evokes from the spectator or the enjoyer an emotion, which is also the essence of the artwork, such that the same *rasa* is in the mind and in the object, the two becoming identical. Thus Abhinavagupta could say that aesthetic experience is an equivalent of the experience of the brahman. The second path is volitional; it arises out of the moral will seeking to embody the moral ideal within itself. When that ideal is reached the subject and the object become one. The third path is that of knowledge. Upon the attainment of the knowledge of the truth, consciousness finds the truth within itself, and not simply as an external object. The late K.C. Bhattacharyya used to say that there are three alternative paths to the absolute. In fact, his own position was even stronger, for he held that these are three alternative absolutes, truth, beauty, goodness. In each of

these paths, finite consciousness reaches its goal and its complete satisfaction. The concept of *ānanda* is not simply one of intense positive feeling, but whatever else it may be; it is a state of restfulness, of peace with itself upon reaching it; nothing else remains to be desired. To say that consciousness is *ānanda* is to say that when this value is realized, it is not realized as something outside of consciousness (for example, a worldly good) but as the consciousness itself. A consciousness of value and the value of consciousness coincide.

Notes

1. In the Advaitin tradition, immediately following Śaṃkara, we find three different interpretations:

(a) The first interpretation originated with Sureśvara (800 CE) and his pupil Sarvajñātma Muni (900 CE). Sureśvara was one of the direct disciples of Śaṃkara and his primary works are *Naiṣkarmyasiddhi*, *Taittirīyopaniṣad Bhāṣya-Vartika*, and *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad Bhāṣya-Vartika.* Sarvajñātma was the author of *Saṃkṣepa-śārīraka.*

(b) The second interpretation originated in the writings of Padmapāda (820 CE), Śaṃkara's closest disciple. He wrote *Pañcapādikā* (PP), an elaboration of Śaṃkara's commentary on the first four aphorisms of the *Brahmasūtras*. Prakāśātman (1200 CE) wrote a commentary on PP entitled *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇaṃ* (PPV), which is the pillar of the Vivaraṇa school and the school is named after it.

(c) Bhāmatī, the third school of interpretation, is associated with Maṇḍanamiśra (800 CE) and Vācaspatimiśra (840 CE). Vācaspati's commentary on Śaṃkara's *Brahmasūtras*, from which this school receives its name, is known as Bhāmatī (the lustrous).

2. CU, VI.8, 10.

3. See CU, 6.2.1 (the brahman as *sat*); *Śveta* 1.3, 5.8 (the brahman as *cit*); and *Kena* 4.6 and TU, 2.7, 3.6 (the brahman as *ānanda*).

4. TU, 2.1.1.

5. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals: Essays in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen 1959), Chapter 3.

6. Husserl calls the Cartesian pure ego 'a little *tag-end* of the world'. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, 'Second Meditation' (trans.) Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 24.

7. Franz Brentano, *Psychology From an Empiricist Standpoint* (trans.) Antos C. Rancurello, D.B. Terrell, and Linda McAlister (New York: Humanities Press, 1973), pp. 35, 91–2.

In the context of explaining Brentano's theory of intentionality, J.N. Mohanty notes: 'Brentano's final position then comes to this: every mental act is conscious (*in fact*, but not on logical or a priori grounds). Every mental act has a twofold object, a primary object and a secondary object. The secondary object is nothing other than the act itself. But the act is aware of itself in three different ways: it *represents* itself, it *knows* itself through inner perception, and it feels itself as pleasurable or painful.' *The Concept of Intentionality* (St Louis: Warren and Green, 1972), p. 19.

8. Mutual negation is the absence of one thing from another; when one thing is different from another, they mutually exclude each other. A chair, for example, is not a table. Consciousness has no other form on the Advaita account.

9. R.F. Hoernle, *Matter, Life, Mind: Five Lectures on Contemporary Tendencies of Thought* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1923).

10. The Nyāya school of Indian philosophy takes the mind to be an instrument of perception and construes it as the eleventh '*indriya*' (sense organ). However, most Advaitins do not recognize it as an *indriya*. The Vivaraṇa and the Bhāmatī traditions disagree regarding the status of mind as a sense organ. Whereas the Vivaraṇa tradition does not take mind to be a sense organ, the Bhāmatī tradition does. The function of mind is to go out to grasp the object and make it manifest. In other words, the mind is not a passive instrument that simply records the impressions; it is active in perceiving an object.

In this context, readers must not lose sight of the fact that the Advaitin conception of '*indriya*' or sense organ is quite different from the generally accepted notion of a sense organ. The term '*indriya*' does not refer to the outer organs of the eyes, ears, nose, etc., located in the physical body, rather, their subtle counterparts constitutive of the subtle body; they are composed of the same type of subtle substance as the inner sense. Sense organs thus can expand and contract as freely as the mind.

11. It is important to note here that although Śaṃkara discusses the inner sense (*antaḥkaraṇa*) at various places in his writings, he never makes his own position on this important concept very clear. At one place, Śaṃkara uses the expression '*antaḥkaraṇadvaya*' (twofold inner senses) which might lead readers to believe that Śaṃkara recognizes two inner senses rather than one, although he never clarifies what those two might be (*Upadeśa* i.3.116). At another place, Śaṃkara describes ātman as the witness of all *antaḥkaraṇas* (*kṛṣnāntaḥkaraṇekṣaṇa*) which suggests that there are more than two *antaḥkaraṇas* (*Upadeśa*, i.18.176). Mayeda suggests that 'each of the modifications of the *antaḥkaraṇa* such as *manas*, *vijñāna*, and *citta* is called *antaḥkaraṇa*: these *antaḥkaraṇas* may be represented by the two words *buddhi* and *manas*' (*ibid*). Deussen argues that for Śaṃkara *antaḥkaraṇa* and *manas* are 'completely interchangeable'. P. Deussen, *The System of the Vedānta* (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. 330.

It is indeed true that Śaṃkara at times uses *buddhi* and *manas* interchangeably. However it is very unlikely that for Śaṃkara, as Deussen argues,

the two are 'completely interchangeable'. Śaṃkara, in his commentary on *Kaṭha*, III.10, takes *buddhi* to be superior to the *manas*, and argues that the *buddhi* is 'more subtle' (*parā sukshmatarā*) than the *manas*. He makes the same point in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*: 'similarly, higher is *buddhi* which is determination or resolution' (III.42)'.

12. The most systematic development of the concept of '*guṇa*' ('quality', 'constituent', 'strand') is found in the Sāṃkhya school of Indian philosophy. It recognizes three *guṇas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. All objects, they (Sāṃkhya) argue, consist of these three *guṇas* in different proportions, which account for the variety that we see in this world. Of these three, the mind, being constituted of the finest essence of the three, that is, the *sattva*, has the quality to expand and contract and assume the form of the object of knowledge, irrespective of whether it is large or small, fine or gross.

13. *Vedānta Paribhāṣa* (VP) states:

sā ca vṛttiś caturvidhā—saṃśayaḥ niścayaḥ, garvaḥ, smaraṇam iti. evaṃ sati vṛttibhedena ekamapi antaḥkaraṇaṃ mana iti buddhir iti ahaṃkāra iti cittaṃ iti cākhyāyate.

Taduktaṃ—
mano buddhir ahaṃkāraś cittaṃ karaṇaṃ āntaraṃ
Saṃśayo niścayo garvaḥ smaraṇaṃ viṣayā ime.

VP in the text quoted above makes a functional differentiation within the inner sense, which, although one, because of its different aspects or functions, comes to be known by different appellations such as mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), the ego sense (*ahaṃkāra*), and recollection (*citta*). When the inner sense has for its limiting adjunct the mental mode in the form of doubt, it is called mind; when it has for its limiting adjunct a mental mode in the form of certitude, it is termed 'intellect'; when the mental mode takes the form of egoity, it is called 'I-ness'; and when it has a mental mode in the form of memory, it is termed 'recollection'. See this author's *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1992), 5.32, pp. 225–6.

14. This, however, is not literally true, for the only thing, on the Advaita view, which can manifest anything is consciousness. So if something non-conscious (such as *vṛtti*) is said to manifest consciousness, what is meant is that it destroys the concealing factor, letting consciousness show itself.

15. The Advaitins hold that in 'I slept soundly and I did not know anything', 'the not-knowing of anything' is only recollected upon waking up. The recollection would not be possible without the initial experience of it during the state of sleep itself. Accordingly, for the Advaitins, the not-knowing is a case of memory; it is not and cannot be an instance of inference. The Naiyāyikas, on the other hand, take the above instance to be a case of inference. It is indeed true that the self exists in deep sleep, but it does not know anything during this state. One becomes aware of the absence of knowledge with the help of reasoning assuming the following form: the self in deep sleep is characterized

by the absence of knowledge because of the non-availability of all the conditions of knowledge (the self, the conjunction of the self with the mind, and the conjunction of the mind with the body). Given that all these means are not available during the state of deep sleep, the subsequent memory of it is impossible. So they conclude that the seeming recollection of not-knowing anything is a case of inference.

The Vivaraṇa tradition holds that in the state of deep sleep, there is the ignorance, the pleasure (*sukha*), and the witness-consciousness each with its own mental mode, giving rise to the remembrance (*parāmarśa*) under consideration. Thus, the judgement 'I knew nothing and I slept happily', is an instance of recollection resulting from the residual impression of the indeterminate experience during deep sleep, *tataśca suṣuptau anubhūta ānandaḥ ātmā bhāvasvarūpājñānaṃ ca trayam apyutthitena parāmarśyate 'sukham aham asvāpsaṃ', na kiñcid avediṣam 'iti nanu etat trayaṃ suṣuptau nāntaḥkaraṇavṛttibhir anubhūyate, tāsāṃ tatrābhāvāt ... avidyaivoktatrayagrāhakavṛttitrayākāreṇa suṣuptau vivartate.* VPS, p. 73.

16. See Note 2 of Chapter Three for the definition of *samavāya.*

17. Śaṃkara rejects the relation of *samavāya.* He argues that if the relation of *samavāya* is needed to unite two different objects, *samavāya* itself, being different from both of them, would need another *samavāya*, and so on ad infinitum. In his historic refutation of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of *asatkāryavāda*, Śaṃkara notes: 'Even in the assumption of a *Samavāya* relation (invariable concomitance) if it is understood that there is a relation as between the *Samavāya*, on the one hand, and the two entities between which such *Samavāya* exists ..., on the other, then such another *Samavāya* relation of that, and then still such another *Samavāya* relation of that, *ad infinitum*, will have to be imagined, and hence the predicament of a *regressus ad infinitum* would result ...' Śaṃkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, Y.M. Apte (trans.) *Brahma-Sūtra-Shānkara-Bhāshya* (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1960), 2.1.18, p. 317.

The point that Śaṃkara is trying to make is as follows: Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of *asatkāryavāda* leads to infinite regress. To explain the relation between two distinct and independent realities—the cause and the effect—requires that we posit a third entity, that is, the relation of invariable concomitance between them. This third entity (which must be distinct from the two terms that it relates), then, in turn, requires a fourth relating entity to relate the third entity with each of the first two terms, and so on ad infinitum.

18. VP defines *pramā* as a cognition that has for its content an entity that is not already known and is not sublated (*anadhigatābādhitārthaviṣayakajñānatvam*). *Pramāṇa*, on the other hand, is the instrument that leads to *pramā.* See *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta*, 1.8, pp. 113–21.

19. See Citsukha, *Tattvapradīpikā*, ed. Yogīndrānanda, with *Nayanaprasādinī* of Pratyakṣarūpa (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1915), pp. 3–11. Hereafter the book will be cited as TP.

Citsukha, an Advaitin of post-Śaṃkara era, in the above work considers at least eleven definitions of self-luminosity. One of the definitions he rejects is that consciousness is itself its own manifestation (*svasya svayam eva prakāśa itivā*). In this context, the Advaitins reject theories that are different from their own. For example, they reject the Prābhākara view that consciousness is its own object, that consciousness indeed is subject as well as object rolled into one. The Prābhākara school holds that the conditions that lead to the origination of a cognition are also the conditions that lead to its manifestation. In a cognition of the form 'I know the table', the cognition manifests itself, the object, and the self, i.e., the substratum of that cognition. The Advaitins reject this and other theories on the ground that consciousness is unobjectifiable and, therefore, cannot be known objectively. Although not knowable objectively, it is not unknown. It is unconditionally immediate. The uniquely defining character of knowledge is that it has the capacity of immediate presentation without being an object of knowledge. They argue that consciousness alone is self-luminous and that all objects are manifested by consciousness. Hence the conclusion: consciousness and the objects are ontologically different.

Citsukha advances the following argument in favour of self-luminosity of consciousness: 'Consciousness is self-luminous, because it is of the nature of experience. A pitcher, for example, is not self-luminous' (*anubhūtiḥ svayaṃprakāśā anubhutitvāt yan naivaṃ tannaivam yathā ghataḥ*). Ibid., sec. 2.4, 21. *Śruti* also testifies to the self-luminous character of the ātman:

cidrūpatvād akarmatvāt svayaṃjyotir iti śruteḥ

ātmanaḥ svaprakāśatvaṃ ko nivārayituṃ kṣamaḥ. Ibid., 1.3, 38.

20. Śaṃkara defines superimposition as the 'apparent presentation (to consciousness), like remembrance, of something previously experienced in something else'. See '*Adhyāsabhāṣya*' of his commentary on the *Brahmasūtra.*

21. See S. S. Suryanārāyana Śāstrī's translation of *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* by Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra (Adyar: The Adyar Library, 1942), Chapter I.

22. In the opening section of his commentary on the *Kena Upaniṣad*, Śaṃkara makes a distinction between pure consciousness, the ground of all other forms of knowledge, and the empirical cognition. The first, being transcendental, pure, and foundational, is the very essence of selfhood. The second, on the other hand, is subject to mutations and change, given that it appears in relation to particular objects.

23. Śaṃkara provides at least five different, though not mutually exclusive, characterizations of *sākṣin*:

1. *Sākṣin* as the witness of the intellect;
2. *Sākṣin* as the non-dual propertyless Brahman;
3. *Sākṣin* as identical to ātman;
4. *Sākṣin* as the witness of all three states; and
5. *Sākṣin* as the same as *Īśvara* .

For a discussion of these senses, see *The Disinterested Witness*, pp. 36–9.

24. *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta*, p. 167.

25. The expression 'conditioned by' and other similar expressions such as 'defined by' and 'limited by' used in this chapter may be understood in the sense in which one may speak of 'space' as defined by the four walls of a room. These are only ascriptions, limiting adjuncts, and not literal delimitations.

26. See Dharmarāja's VP, the chapter on perception.

27. Here we find a very Aristotelian picture indeed. Compare this to the account given by Aristotle in *De Anima*, where he argues that in sense perception we only receive the form and not the matter of the object, because a sense 'has the power of receiving into itself the sensible forms of things without the matter. This must be conceived of as taking place in the way in which a piece of wax takes on the impress of a signet ring without the iron or gold; we say that what produces the impression is a signet of bronze or gold, but its particular metallic constitution makes no difference; in a similar way the sense is affected by what is colored or flavored or sounding, but it is indifferent what in each case the substance is ...' Aristotle, *De Anima*, 424 a 18.

28. *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta*, pp. 167–8. Readers may wish to compare VP example given above with the one given by Śaṃkara using the metaphors of copper and its mould, and of light and its object:

mūṣāsiktaṃ yathā tāmraṃ tannibhaṃ jāyate tathā
rūpādin vyāpnuvac cittaṃ tannibhaṃ dṛśyate dhruvam. Upadeśa, I.14.3.

'Just as [molten] copper assumes the form of the mould into which it is poured, similarly is certainly experienced the *citta*, pervading [the object's] form-colour, appears like it.'

Again,

vyañjako vā yathāloko vyaṅgyasyākāratāmiyāt
sarvārthavyañjakatvād dhīrarthākārā pradṛśyate.

'Just as light, the illuminator, assumes the forms of whatever is illuminated by it, so the intellect assumes the forms of objects, in as much as it illuminates all objects.' Ibid., I.14.3.

Madhusūdana Sárasvatī's *Advaitasiddhi* explains the process as follows: 'the Vritti [*vṛtti*] of the inner organ is like the water of rivers or tanks which being carried through a channel to an adjoining field encircles the trunk of a tree requiring water and assumes the form of a water-basin around it and remains connected with the main source through the channel.' Quoted from Prahlad Chandrashekhar Devanji (trans.), *Siddhāntabindu of Madhusūdana with the Commentary of Purushottama*. Gaekwad Oriental Series, Vol. 64 (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1933), n. 3, p. 235. Hereafter this edition will be cited as SB.

29. Though all the Advaitins agree that the function of *vṛtti* is to manifest objects, they differ regarding the way in which an object becomes revealed to

the cognizer. These differences are primarily a function of their views of the knowing self and its relation to the world. In general, there are three different views as to how the mental mode assumes the form of the object thereby leading to the perception of it: for the sake of association with consciousness (*ciduparāga*); for the sake of the removal of the veil that hides the object (*āvaraṇābhibhava*); and for the manifestation of non-difference of the consciousness conditioned by the object and the consciousness conditioned by the subject (*abhedābhivyakti*). SLS, Chapter 1, pp. 51; 187.

VP, however, accepts the third theory of the functioning of a mental mode. VP maintains that in the perceptual process the consciousness conditioned by the mind and the consciousness conditioned by the object become non-different. For a discussion of some of these issues, see *Perceiving in Advaita Vedānta*, Chapters 3–4.

30. ... *antaḥkaraṇapariṇāmāḥ sarve'pi sākṣivedyatvādaparokṣāḥ* .... VPS, p. 223.

31. Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, *Advaitasiddhi* (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1988), p. 544. Henceforth this edition will be cited as AS.

32. 'If anything is a priori in the sense of being the non-empirical condition of the possibility of experience—in a large segment of Indian thought—*avidyā* or ignorance may be said to be that. It is non-empirical, for ignorance has—in Buddhism as well as in Vedānta—no origin: it is beginningless (*anādi*).' J.N. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 270.

33. For a proper understanding of the Advaita system, one must not lose sight of the distinction between false (*mithyā*) and unreal. False, for the Advaitins, though not unreal, is other than the real (*sadviviktatvam vā mithyātvam*). The concept of unreal is self-contradictory, for example, the son of a barren woman. False, on the other hand, is an object of experience, for example, rope-snake. Falsity appears and is later negated or contradicted. It is important to keep in mind that the false and the unreal belong to different ontological levels.

34. *Sarvaṃ jñātatayā ajñātatyā vā sākṣicaitanyasya viṣayaḥ*. Srirāma Śāstrī, *Pañcapādikāvivaraṇam, 1st Varṇaka* (Madras: Government Oriental Manuscript Library, 1958), pp. 83–4. Henceforth this edition will be cited as PPV.

35. MU, 2.2.11; CU, 3.14.1.

36. It is important to keep in mind the Advaitin distinction between primal nescience (*mūlāvidyā*) and derivative nesciences (*tulāvidyās*): the first explains the appearance of the world, the second individual illusions. Primal nescience is positive, with no beginning in time. Time is an aspect of it and, accordingly falls within it. Whereas primal nescience is one, derivative nesciences, being the effects of primal nescience, are many. Derivative nesciences are the impressions left on the minds in the phenomenal world. They have a beginning in time and account for individual bondage and freedom. Derivative nescience is removed by a mental mode of the inner sense. Primal nescience, on the other hand, is sublated by the knowledge of the brahman on the realization of *mokṣa*.

37. When the Advaitins argue that on account of nescience the non-dual brahman appears as the world, two important questions arise: (1) To whom does this nescience belong? (2) What is the object of nescience? Regarding the locus of nescience, Śaṃkara's followers are divided. The Vivaraṇa tradition maintains that pure consciousness is the locus of nescience. In *Naiṣkarmya Siddhi*, Sureśvara states that the brahman is both the content and the locus of ignorance. Ignorance always points to the ignorance of something; it requires a substratum in which to exist. The self and the not-self are the only two ontological categories. Therefore, the self must be the locus of *avidyā*: 'It is absurd to suppose that that which is logically and causally prior can only exist supported by and dependent on its own effect. Nor, again, has the not-self any form independent of and different from ignorance whereby it could serve as its locus and support.' *The Naiṣkarmya Siddhi of Śrī Sureśvara* trans. A.J. Alston (London: Shanti Sadan, 1959), book 3, 111. The Bhāmatī school, on the other hand, argues that the individual self is the locus of nescience; it obscures the true nature of the brahman, thereby making it an object. Vācaspati, *Bhāmatī*: *Jīvādhikaraṇāpya avidyā.* 1.4.3. All the followers of Śaṃkara admit that the brahman is the object of nescience.

38. This account of the relation between Sāṃkhya *pariṇaṃvāda* and the way it has been appropriated in the Advaita *vivartavāda* seems to be contradicted by Śaṃkara's own critique of the Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika theories in his BSBh, where against these positions he seems to be defending the thesis that the world is created by an omniscient conscious being. In order to reconcile the *bhāṣya*, with the Advaita metaphysical position, one should keep the following points in mind: (1) though Śaṃkara totally rejects Vaiśeṣika atomism, he does not totally reject the Sāṃkhya theory of *prakṛti*; (2) he criticizes the Sāṃkhya claim that the transformation of *prakṛti* is spontaneous that requires no guidance of a conscious being; and (3) the theistic idea of creation that he seems to defend in BSBh as against Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya does not represent his final position. From Śaṃkara's perspective, Sāṃkhya gives a more plausible account of the origin of the world than Vaiśeṣika. But Sāṃkhya's account needs to be supplemented by a provisional theism. However, this provisional position is eventually overcome when the Sāṃkhya *prakṛti* is construed as *avidyā*, depending upon the brahman understood as pure consciousness (*cinmātrā*), not to be mistaken with the god of theism. In the above account of Advaita, I have only formulated the final Advaita position without going through an intermediate theistic position which Śaṃkara provisionally advances only to be finally transcended.

39. Paul Hacker holds that self-luminosity 'is a special aspect of the self's freedom. It implies that the self is known in a manner different from the way in which objects become known. The self is not an object. It is not necessary to prove ... that the self exists. On the contrary, the self's luminosity is the presupposition for any object's being known. One may say in a paradox that the self is unknowable because it cannot become an object of knowledge, but it is at the same time better known than any object in as much as no object can

be cognized save in the light of the self.' 'Śaṃkara's Conception of Man', in *Kleine Schriften* (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1978), p. 128. M. Merleau-Ponty argues along the same lines, when he writes: 'At the root of all our experiences and all our reflections, we find, then, a being which immediately recognizes itself, because it is its knowledge both of itself and of all things, and which knows its own existence, not by observation and as a given fact, nor by inference from any idea of itself but through direct contact with that existence. Self-consciousness is the very being of mind in action. The act whereby I am conscious of something must itself be apprehended at the very moment at which it is carried out, otherwise it would collapse.' *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 371–2.

40. MAU, 2–7.

41. For a discussion of K.C. Bhattacharyya's account of consciousness, see the next chapter of this work.

6

Transformations of the Advaita Theory of Consciousness

ŚRĪ AUROBINDO

In reviewing contemporary Indian philosophy, one comes across divergent influences on it. However, it is not an exaggeration to say that Indian philosophy has primarily been influenced by Advaita Vedānta and continues to develop under this influence. In this chapter, I shall draw the attention of my readers to the transformation that the Advaita theory of consciousness has undergone in Indian thought. In modern times, one attempt to answer the questions raised in the previous chapter was made by Śrī Aurobindo. He rejects Śaṃkara's version of Advaita, and its emphasis on the falsity of the world, and develops a metaphysical position known as Integral Advaita. According to this position, the brahman is both transcendent and immanent in the world, and the finite individuals are self-manifestations of the brahman by its own infinite creative energy. In his metaphysics, he subscribes to a theory of emergent evolution; he further argues that the idea of evolution presupposes a prior involution. Matter, maintains Aurobindo, develops through the stages of life, mind, and many other levels of consciousness, because the spirit had descended into matter and remains in it potentially. This is a form of the classical *satkāryavāda* (that the effect pre-exists in the material cause) that allows for the emergence of new qualitative changes.

In the last paragraph of his magnum opus, *The Life Divine*, Śrī Aurobindo presents his spiritual vision in the following words:

> If there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life must be the goal of development towards which we are tending and which will manifest at an early or later stage of our destiny. The self, the spirit, the reality that is disclosing itself out of the first inconscience of

> life and matter, would evolve its complete truth of being and consciousness in that life and matter. It would return to itself—or, if its end as an individual is to return into its Absolute, it could make that return also,—not through a frustration of life but through a spiritual completeness of itself in life. Our evolution in the Ignorance with its chequered joy and pain of self-discovery and world-discovery, its half fulfilments, its constant finding and missing, is only our first state. It must lead inevitably towards an evolution in the Knowledge, a self-finding and self-unfolding of the Spirit, a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still a Supernature.[1]

Though the above quotation begins with a conditional, the preceding nine hundred and forty-six pages of *The Life Divine* seek to establish that the claims made in the above paragraph are indeed true.

In this chapter, however, I am not concerned with Śrī Aurobindo's overall metaphysical system. I am concerned only with the bearing his theory of evolution/involution has on his account of consciousness, which has certain major affinities with the theory of Kāshmīr Śaivism.[2] Abhinavagupta describes the nature of consciousness in its highest state as *spanda* or the eternal throb of delight in manifestations, and argues that its power or force for self-externalization is beyond the sphere of time. Consciousness abides in the various forms of objectivity by means of 'coagulation' (*āśrayānarūpatayā*), as if consciousness assumes the form of solidity of matter without losing its naure just as water becomes ice without losing its nature. Consciousness voluntarily (*bodhasvātantryādeva*) descends into the limitations of matter on account of its inherent freedom.[3] Not unlike the other Vedāntins, for example Śaṃkara, Abhinavagupta uses the metaphor of light; however, on his interpretation, this light by its own freedom and delight evolves into the multitude of worldly entities. The relation between consciousness and its creative power is symbolized by the figures of *Śiva* and *Śakti*. Whereas *Śiva* is of the nature of pulsation of creativity in general (*sāmānya-prakāśa-spanda*), *Śakti* is of the nature of stimulating the general creative power into specific manifestations.

In his theory of involution/evolution, Śrī Aurobindo also holds that the evolutionary structure of the world process is due to consciousness-force inherent in the brahman: 'All phenomenal existence resolves into Force, into a movement of energy that assumes more as less material, more or less gross or subtle forms for self-presentation to its own experience.'[4] However, how this force gives rise to consciousness is a problem with which philosophers have been concerned, especially in

the Indian tradition, ever since the beginning of philosophy. As far as force is concerned, Aurobindo sees in it a twofold movement; it concentrates itself by being in a state of equilibrium or rest, and it diffuses itself in movements in time. But the question arises: what is the relation between this force and consciousness? Ordinarily, one understands by consciousness what may be called the mental waking consciousness. Aurobindo calls it 'vulgar and shallow idea of the nature of consciousness' and suggests that it must now 'definitely disappear out of philosophical thinking'. There is not only something in us which is conscious when we sleep, but also in all seemingly unconscious states. Behind the superficial waking consciousness there is a vast subliminal mind. This subliminal mind, argues Aurobindo, has both superconscient and subconscient dimensions. The superconscient arises above the mental and the subconscient below the mental. Below the mental, there is a vital consciousness, not only in plant and animal lives, but also in human organism. There is also a consciousness dormant in the purely physical level as indicated by the free movement of subatomic particles. Above the mental, there is the superconscient, which is aware of the unity of all beings and not the primacy of these divisions, which separate one mind from another. When viewed from this wider perspective, for Aurobindo, the force that pervades existence is inseparable from *cit* or consciousness; *cit* is also *śakti* (force). This consciousness-force is the stuff of which all existence is made.

> Man's consciousness can be nothing else than a form of Nature's consciousness. It is there in other involved forms below Mind, it emerges in Mind, it shall ascend into yet superior forms beyond Mind. For the Force that builds the worlds is a conscious Force, the Existence which manifests itself in them is conscious being and a perfect emergence of potentialities in form is the sole object which we can rationally conceive for its manifestation in the world of forms.[6]

Consciousness, like light, is not merely self-manifesting, it is also force or energy—and as energy it is capable of self-contraction and self-expansion, descent and ascent. Thus, in his theory of involution/evolution,[7] Aurobindo argues that nature evolves on several levels because the brahman (*saccidānanda*: *sat* or existent being, *cit* or consciousness-force, and *ānanda* or bliss) has already involved itself at each level. From a logical point of view, prior to evolution there is involution whereby the brahman seeks its own manifestation in the multilevel world. The order of involution is as follows:

Existence ↓
Consciousness-Force
Bliss

Supermind

Mind
Psyche
Life
Matter

After plunging into the farthest limit, that is, the lowest form, consciousness turns around and begins climbing the steps it has earlier descended. Evolution, in other words, is the inverse action of involution. It is a conscious movement. Evolution presupposes involution. In fact, evolution is possible because involution has already occurred: '... what is an ultimate and last derivation in the involution is in the evolution the last and supreme emergence.'[8] Thus, the actual steps of the evolutionary process are as follows:

Matter ↓
Life
Psyche
Mind
...
Supermind

Bliss
Consciousness-Force
Existence

The first four in the order of evolution constitute the lower hemisphere and the last four the upper hemisphere. Evolution from the lower to the higher, that is, from matter to spirit, is possible because each level contains within it the potentiality to attain a higher status:

> Matter would not have become animate if the principle of life had not been there constituting matter and emerging as a phenomenon of life-in-matter; life-in-matter could not have begun to feel, perceive, think, reason, if the principle of mind had not been there behind life and substance, constituting it as a field of operation and emergent in the phenomenon of a thinking life and body; so too spiritually in mind is

> the sign of a power which itself has founded and constituted life, mind and body and now emerging as a spiritual being in a living and thinking body.[9]

Thus, a pervasive theme of Aurobindo's thinking is how mental consciousness is to be transcended into supra-mental consciousness. Mental consciousness, always measures, limits, separates things from the indivisible whole to which they belong. It is not merely in its physical perception but also in its creative thinking, that mind separates and fixes those separated entities within what it takes to be their limit. It may have the idea of an infinite unity of things, but it conceives of it vaguely as a vast background. The liberation of the spirit into its true consciousness, however, cannot be attained simply by the action of the higher principle helping and transforming the lower. For example, life and mind evolve in matter. They affect and modify the matter to some extent, and in turn, are modified by it. They succeed in changing its immobility, inertia only partially—they are not able to transform it altogether. The living body is subject to death and decay. Ignorance and error also characterize the mind that evolves in the matter. Mind has the power of analysis and discrimination, but it cannot arrive at a true unity. We usually take it for granted that the human mind with its rationality is the highest achievement. Aurobindo questions this belief and holds that the supra-mental consciousness does not directly descend into the mind, and that a link is required, a kind of creative consciousness which contains and views unity and diversity at once; it is intimately conscious of all the relations of the one with the other. For want of a better word to express this idea, Aurobindo calls such a power of divine creative consciousness, the 'supermind'. In Aurobindo's words, it is 'a power of Conscious-Force expressive of real being, born out of real being, and partaking of its nature and neither a child of the Void nor a weaver of fictions. It is conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own imperishable and immutable substance.'[10] It is the culmination or the consummation of mind. The difference between the supermind and the mind is the difference in their way of looking at reality. The supermind has an integral outlook and it achieves a unitary picture of reality; the mind by its very nature cuts and breaks apart the unitary whole into parts. The supermind is the link which connects the two horizons, the lower and the higher. The supermind develops the three aspects of the Absolute without dividing or separating them in any way. Aurobindo calls the supermind the real idea. It is the reality that illuminates itself by its own light and expresses the real truth of being. The instrumentality of the

supermind is needed for both: the descent of supra-mental consciousness into the mind and its ascent to supra-mental consciousness.

The next step in the evolution, therefore, is an ascent to the supermind, which can be achieved through a triple transformation—psychic, spiritual, and supra-mental. Psychic change is the removal of the veil, which hides our psyche or soul. Psychic change, however, must be supplemented by the spiritual change. This change gives us an abiding sense of the Infinite—it is the experience of the true nature of the self, the *Īśvara* and the divine *śakti*. Whereas the psychic change is movement inward, the spiritual change is movement upward. It helps one discover one's spiritual being so that one may become conscious of the truth of the supra-mental consciousness. The spiritual transformation must eventually encompass all the levels of consciousness, for example, the mental, vital, and material levels; however, their total transformation cannot be materialized on this level. The spiritual transformation must give way to the next higher transformation, that is, supra-mental transformation built upon the psychic–spiritual transformation.

The psychic and spiritual transformations, though necessary, are not sufficient for supra-mental transformation. Just as there are lines of communication of the mental with what is below it, so also there are lines of contact with what is higher. Also, the line of transition from psychic–spiritual to supra-mental is not the same for all individuals. Aurobindo discusses many such lines of communication with the supra-mental. In this context, he distinguishes between many different possible movements of mind or consciousness, none of which succeeds in revealing the original oneness of being, but in general, these movements can be resolved into 'a stairway of four ascents',[11] namely the higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, and overmind.

The higher mind is the first step above normal human intelligence. It is 'a luminous thought-mind, a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge'.[12] The normal human mind depends for its knowledge on sense experience, inference, and other sources of knowledge. The higher mind, on the other hand, can conceive a system of ideas 'at a single view'. Since the higher mind remains limited to thought or cognition, it seeks a more direct grasp of reality and moves from a conceptual realm to a perceptual one, that is, from the higher to the illumined mind.

Intense lustre, a splendour, and illumination of the spirit characterize the illumined mind. In Aurobindo's words:

> Consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker.

> The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought: it is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of the Truth and not only her figure; but it outlines the figure also and at the same time catches the significance of the figure, and it can embody here with a finer and bolder revealing outline and a larger comprehension and power of totality than thought-conception can manage.[13]

The illumined mind possesses greater power and higher consciousness, but the integration or transformation of human personality is not yet complete. It must ascend to still another higher sphere.

The next step is the intuitive mind. It is an outcome of the meeting of the subject and object consciousness. He notes: 'what is vaguely called intuition, which itself is of many different kinds and in some forms may be an intervention from above'.[14] It gives a conceptual unity with the object apprehended. It has nothing mental about it. At the mental level, the knowledge of the external world is obtained by the sense and the intellect—which grasp simply the appearances or forms of objects. At the level of intuition, however, the consciousness of the subject penetrates and comes in contact with the reality that underlies the appearances. The mind also reaches out of the limits of the personal ego in order to look at things with certain universality. There are other phenomena such as what he called the phenomenon of genius, the phenomenon of inspiration, of revelatory vision, not to speak of the vast field of mystic and spiritual experiences.[15] Intuition, Aurobindo maintains, has a fourfold power: 'A power of revelatory truth-seeking, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence, or power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth.'[16] The intuitive mind, however, is not the summit of superconscient consciousness. At the source of the intuitive mind exists the overmind, which is in direct touch with the supermind.

Intuition, though possessing revelatory power, cannot serve as a link between the mind and the supermind due to its instability and influence of the mental. It derives its power from a superconscient cosmic mind, which Aurobindo calls the 'overmind', which serves as a liaison between the mind and the supermind.

Overmind is a delegate of the supermind. The overmind bridges the gap between knowledge and ignorance, between the brahman and the partial manifestation of the brahman in evolution. This is the highest stage in the realm of ignorance. It seizes the unity of the brahman, yet, it

cannot hold on to it in a permanent realization. The overmental descent (which Śrī Aurobindo is supposed to have experienced on 24 November 1926) enables the illumined-intuitive to make contact with the global consciousness. Thus, the overmental descent brings in the elimination of egocentric attitudes and helps the soul attain a larger experience of the delight of existence. However, it cannot take mind beyond itself. In short, the overmind, though the highest stage of lower knowledge immediately under the highest knowledge, is not able to effect an integral transformation. What is needed is the supra-mental change, which is effected by the descent of the supermind and the corresponding ascent to the supermind. This transformation is axiologically and qualitatively different from other transformations and, therefore, defies any descriptions via language rooted in the perceptual–conceptual realm. As a result, the overmind and all other levels of knowledge are transformed by the force of the descent of supra-mental transformation. The supra-mental transformation signifies a transformation of ignorance into knowledge and the emergence of gnostic being. The spiritual life, as a result, does not require a rejection of the world but rather implies a free acceptance of it because a gnostic personality has realized that matter is also consciousness. Thus, the world, Aurobindo argues, is neither a figment of one's mind nor an illusion. His realistic streak would not allow him to surrender the reality of the world to the deceptive play of *māyā*, the theory accepted by Śaṃkara. Aurobindo placed the many and the becoming in the very heart of consciousness and made it the basis as well as the source of the many—basis not in the sense of simply being the support of the many, but rather in the sense of being the essence of the many.

A very unique feature of Śrī Aurobindo's theory of evolution is its triple character. It involves the processes of widening, heightening, and integration. Widening involves extension of scope and incorporation of co-existent forms, as well as development and growth towards higher forms. Heightening means ascent from grade to grade, from the lower to the higher. For example, when the principle of life evolves out of matter, there is an ascent. The consciousness present in a latent form in the matter arises to a higher grade, that is, life. However, evolution is not simply rising from the lower grades to the higher ones by the rejection or exclusion of the lower ones. On the contrary, the lower ones are uplifted and transformed. This is known as integration. It is 'a taking up of what has already been evolved into each higher grade as it is reached and a transformation more or less complete so as to admit of a total

changed working of the whole being and nature, an integration, must also be part of the process, if the evolution is to be effective'.[17] Aurobindo further maintains that the individual is the basic instrument of this evolution. An individual possesses within its being various powers of consciousness that are capable of an unlimited awareness and knowledge. These higher powers of consciousness must emerge, develop, and reach completion through an individual's mental, vital, and physical being in order for the spiritual evolution to be fulfilled. Descent, he maintains, is a necessary condition of evolution. It is an original force in the universe. In fact, ascent and integration are possible because of the descent of the consciousness. The higher descends into the lower and changes its order and working according to its own laws. Thus when life emerges out of matter, it not only signifies an ascent to a higher grade but also a transformation in matter.

Thus it is not surprising that according to Aurobindo these levels are not independent, but are essentially a manifestation of the spirit. Śrī Aurobindo categorically affirms the value of each of these levels. But he also states that when the lower levels are separated from their spiritual source, they experience an ignorance of their true self and reality. In the words of Aurobindo: 'This lapse, this separation creates a state of limited knowledge exclusively concentrated on its own limited world-order and oblivious of all that is behind it and of the underlying unity, a state therefore of Cosmic and individual ignorance.'[18] And, 'the end of this triple process', Aurobindo observes, 'must be a radical change of the action of the Ignorance into a basis of complete consciousness—a completeness which exists at present only in what to us is superconscience'.[19] Thus his triple process is involved in the raising of all potentially higher principles out of their lower status to the level of the divine.

The short account of Aurobindo given above quickly reveals that his theory of evolution is thoroughly spiritual. Spirit or consciousness is not only the source of creation but also the final end of realization. *Saccidānanda*, as an infinite being creates the universe and unfolds itself as many. Evolution is the unfolding of consciousness in matter, until the former becomes explicit, open, and perceptible. Spirit's involvement in matter, its manifestation in grades of consciousness is the significance of evolution.

Anybody familiar with Kāshmīr Śaivism will realize that Aurobindo's conception so far is explicitly present in Kāshmīr Śaivism. Aurobindo's original contribution, however, lies in going further and developing in

great detail a theory of the different levels of consciousness: consciousness as implicit in matter (perhaps as manifested in the free play of elementary particles); consciousness as again escaping from the state of dormancy in matter into a state of relative freedom in animal sensitivity, which may be called vital consciousness (manifested in the energy of a living being towards self-maintenance, self-motion, self-reproduction, and towards appropriating the energy of external nature towards its own growth); and mental consciousness as expressed in mental thinking dominated by difference, conceptual construction, and, above all, by a subject–object dualism. Aurobindo does not stop with this, but goes even further, invoking the idea of several levels of consciousness higher than the mental, both from resources of the ancient scriptures—the Vedas and the Upaniṣads—as well as from his own mystic experiences and those of others. He introduces the categories of *overmind* and *supermind*; these levels of consciousness are marked by the distinct ways in which differences are brought together into unity. It is in the supra-mental consciousness that identity and differences are most harmoniously reconciled.

In our times, many theories have been advanced to explain how life and mind evolve out of lower forms, for example, matter. Aurobindo categorically asserts that evolution cannot be understood without coming to grips with the process of involution. His account of consciousness has at least the possibility of providing the basis on which a metaphysics of consciousness may be constructed to yield a satisfactory philosophy of science, of physics, of biology, and of psychology. We have seen that whereas Śaṃkara's Advaita remains indifferent to this project, Aurobindo's remains committed to it. He repeatedly reiterates that consciousness should not be restricted to the mental, the restriction generally imposed by the philosophers. It is worth noting that unlike the main tradition of Western thought, Indian philosophy clearly separates consciousness (*cit*) from the mind (*manas*). Aurobindo's account of the levels of consciousness both below the mental and above the mental, therefore, provides a very promising prospect for a philosophy of science.

K.C. Bhattacharyya

Even in the writings of such an orthodox Vedāntin as the late K.C. Bhattacharyya, we find a remarkable attempt to begin with what he calls 'bodily subjectivity'. Totally untouched by the thoughts of Aurobindo, Bhattacharyya by his own reflections on Vedānta developed

a conception of the grades of subjectivity, which may also be called grades of consciousness. In developing such a system, Bhattacharyya—unlike Aurobindo—does not make use of a theory of evolution. Bhattacharyya instead understands subjectivity to be that which dissociates itself from objects (an object being that which is meant, posited, or literally designated). By dissociating itself from objects, the subject achieves its freedom, but through many different levels of subjectivity, better yet, consciousness.

Bhattacharyya has written about consciousness, subjectivity, and freedom at various places. A careful study of Bhattacharyya's writings reveals that his thoughts on consciousness have passed through distinct stages of development. My analyses of Bhattacharyya's account of consciousness here will be based on his *Studies in Vedāntism*,[20] *The Subject as Freedom*,[21] 'The Concept of Philosophy',[22] and 'The Absolute and its Alternative Forms'.[23]

Gopinath Bhattacharyya, K.C. Bhattacharyya's son and the editor of his works entitled *Studies in Philosophy*, in the 'Introduction' to this work, draws the attention of the readers to several of his father's 'innovations'[24] in *Studies in Vedāntism*. In this section on Bhattacharyya's account of consciousness, I shall confine my discussion only to three of these innovations. These are:

1. A conception of the levels of consciousness;
2. Dream experience as a new dimension of existence;
3. Distinction between conscious dream, self-conscious dream, and dreamless sleep.

In his earliest work *Studies in Vedāntism*,[25] especially in Chapter I, Bhattacharyya provides a somewhat new interpretation of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the four states of consciousness, namely, waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and the *turīya*. He speaks of many stages of dream, and also of transitional stages between waking and dreaming. He argues that whereas in waking experiences, presentations and practical interests determine the contents, in dream, the contents are copies of waking percepts, without any sensation and attention, therefore, imaginative construction is more free. Combinations of contents, impossible in waking consciousness, characterize the dream state. In dream, there are no sensations, and the consciousness of the body is at a minimal. In his language, 'in dreams the distractions of this "heavy" body are reduced to a minimum sometimes disappearing altogether; the necessity of practical life is not so tyrannic, and hence there is unrestrained credulity'.[26]

In dreaming consciousness, there is awareness of body, but only of body which does not obey the laws of physics. In dream, I may fall from a high-rise building, and not be hurt. I may move from one place to another (from India to USA) without being subject to the laws of space, time, and motion. In dreaming, 'practical necessity' is at a minimum. However, it must be noted before proceeding that 'practical necessity' and its determination of a content may function within dream; for example, when I dream that I am thirsty, I look for water, and the water I find quenches my thirst—all within dream. Further, according to Bhattacharyya, space and time, within dream, lose their reference to the body. Dream-space and dream-time are discontinuous. For example, in my dream, I may be in Columbia, Missouri, one minute and in India the next, without having to go through the intermediate space or time. So, there is 'no rigid demand for uniformity', meaning that there are surprises, discontinuities, unpredictable behaviour or events, which Bhattacharyya describes as 'a glorious life of thoughtless thoughtlessness'.[27] It is important to note in this context that though the dream contents lack uniformity, continuity, etc., this incoherence (lack of uniformity, continuity, etc.) is not felt to be such within dream.[28] Dream contents and sensory presentations are never together, and cannot be compared. For dreaming consciousness, the waking consciousness does not exist. 'In dream, the ideas do not consciously remember the corresponding waking percepts: they are at once percepts.'[29] It seems as if dream and waking are two independent orders. Waking experience denies the validity of dream. The dreaming consciousness, however, does not deny the waking consciousness.

In short, in dream, the object consciousness is freer from reference to the body and so purer than in waking consciousness. The consciousness of body determines the limitations of waking consciousness. Practical interests and sensory stimuli are grounded in the body consciousness. Thus, dream is wider than the waking world.[30] More is possible in dream than in waking. Being free from sensation (and body consciousness) dream allows for freer construction. Waking experience claims to be true, but that is because of the overwhelming importance of sensory givenness, of body, and of practical interest. Gradually, we free ourselves from this dependence on the body, on sensory awareness, and on practical interest. Will, especially moral will, denies the claim of the given. Aesthetic intuition also rejects the dependence on sensation.

Taking his clues from the dreaming consciousness, which suggests this possibility of independence from the sensory given (and from body

consciousness and practical interest), Bhattacharyya suggests that if and only if we could dream self-consciously, that is, control the dream images, take our focus away from the 'heavy body', and centre it in a larger self, we could achieve a higher order of truth than the waking experience.

Bhattacharyya's suggestion is to follow the lead of dream in freeing ourselves from the limitations of the waking experiences, and still be in possession of ourselves by dreaming self-consciously. This is not to suggest that the dream is truer than the waking percept, rather each is true within itself. Dreams do not deny the truth of the waking life. The dream world, argues Bhattacharyya, has a wider possibility than the waking world. There is no other phenomenon like it in our waking mental life. Even in hallucination, there is some real sensory object and some real peripheral excitement from within. However, rooted as we are in our body and to the here and the now, this unbounded freedom of dream consciousness is not for us truth giving but rather illusory.

This explains the three levels he distinguishes: conscious dreams, self-conscious dreams, and dreamless sleep. Conscious dreams are perceptions without sensations. In conscious dreams, ideas, without reference to corresponding waking percept, are themselves percepts. In self-conscious dreams objects come and go without startling us. The self is free from the body, it may even see the body lying asleep, it is not located anywhere,, yet it looks at space. It is not startled by interruptions of spatial and temporal continuity. The only way we can conceptualize this experience is by saying that 'the self sees here with the whole of space as one function'.[31] The self seems to freely create this world, its joys and sorrows. Bhattacharyya regards it to be a new plane of consciousness.

In dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*), the self is dissociated not only from the body but also from the mind (empirical consciousness). It rests in itself. Bhattacharyya regards it as identical with what Kant calls the 'transcendental unity of apperception', excepting that Kant regards it as a mere thought and also as a fringe of empirical consciousness, while Bhattacharyya regards it in isolation from empirical consciousness, but also as a concrete reality, and not mere thought.

The undifferentiated consciousness of dreamless sleep leads to the discussion of the ecstatic consciousness of *samādhi*. In the dreamless state, the mind or the empirical consciousness is dissociated from the self and the self is conscious only of a blank, of a positive nothing, like a light revealing nothing but the surrounding darkness. The state of ecstasy

is not bare consciousness; it is rather supra-consciousness; it is the Upanisadic *turīya*.

However, for a more systematic and detailed account of his thoughts on consciousness, I shall make use of his work *The Subject as Freedom* in which we find a systematic presentation of his theory, which is a revised version of the account of consciousness found in his early writings. In this work, Bhattacharyya's series of the gradation of consciousness—from the waking consciousness at the lowest to the ecstasy at the highest level—is replaced by another series, of the levels of subjectivity, beginning with bodily subjectivity and ending with the subject as absolute freedom.

In *The Subject as Freedom*, Bhattacharyya develops a new kind of inquiry into the nature of the subject or of consciousness, which lies midway between mystic intuition on the one hand, and an objective metaphysical inquiry on the other. He calls it 'spiritual' or 'transcendental psychology', in which he, like a phenomenologist, gives a descriptive account of the various subjective functions. It seems that the very point of beginning is an account of his complex and difficult theory of intentionality although he does not use the word 'intentionality'. Whereas for a phenomenologist, intentionality connects consciousness to the world, for Bhattacharyya, to every mode of intentionalily there is a corresponding 'dissociation from the object'. This implies that for every subjective function, there is a mode of freedom from objectivity. It is not clear whether this reversal of the intentional reference, this dissociation or freedom from the object, or return from outward directedness to the inner freedom is compatible with the thesis of intentionality as ordinarily understood. This is one of the questions Bhattacharyya does not discuss. However, its importance becomes obvious if we evaluate Bhattacharyya's position vis-à-vis modern phenomenology.

The different stages of subjectivity are: bodily subjectivity, psychic subjectivity, and spiritual subjectivity.

Talking about bodily subjectivity, a notable feature of Bhattacharyya's thinking, when placed against the background of the Indian systems of philosophy, is the recognition of bodily subjectivity as primary. 'The materialist view that the subject is but the body,' argues Bhattacharyya, 'is true insofar as the body represents the beginning stage of being the subject. But it ignores the unique singularity of one's own body even as a perceived object.'[32] The other perceived objects, one may say, are constituted by their positions in space relative to the perceiver's body. But the perceiver's own body cannot be located by her in the same way

in the space. In this sense, her body is uniquely differentiated from the other objects and cannot be entirely assimilated to the objective world. One not only perceives one's own body from the outside (which is never true of the body as a whole), but one is always aware of it from within in what Bhattacharyya calls 'the feeling of the body'. So Bhattacharyya makes a distinction between the 'perceived body' and the 'felt body'. However, the relation between the two is such that although the perceived body is distinguished from the felt body, the felt body is not distinguished from the perceived body. This illustrates the logic of Bhattacharyya's thinking: If A is distinguished from B, B is not necessarily distinguished from A. When B is not distinguished from A while A is distinguished from B, B is a higher form of, in this case, subjectivity. Bodily subjectivity, which is experienced in the felt body (as distinguished from the perceived body), is the first realization of freedom from the object by which the body is surrounded. The felt body or the body feeling indeed, on Bhattacharyya's account, is the first level of freedom from which all higher levels of freedom begin. For my present purpose, it is important to add that what Bhattacharyya calls 'body feeling', or 'the feeling of the body', is none other than the body consciousness or the consciousness of the body. Let me also add that 'consciousness of the body' may be rewritten as 'consciousness (of) the body'. The point of doing this is to highlight what Sartre calls the non-thetic or non-intentional nature of this consciousness, meaning thereby that the body in this case is not an object of consciousness but rather that the body, the body feeling, the body consciousness are all, at this primary level, one and the same.

The next level of subjectivity is the psychic subjectivity. The most elementary level of this stage is image. The image is known without spatial position and it is not known with a temporal position. If I have an image of a house in my mind, I do not locate it as here or now. Within an image, its parts may have spatial relations to each other, but the image as a whole is not asserted to be here or there. The image rather appears as a ghostly object, a sort of indefinite quasi-object. But when it is attended to in introspection, it changes into the act of imaging, a sort of standing process from which emerges the next level of psychic subjectivity, namely, 'thought' or 'idea'. The thought or idea of an object, as distinguished from an image, unlike the image as a process, is definite, and at its height becomes unpictureable meaning. Thus at this level, thought is distinct from an image, not located either in space or in time. The introspective awareness of this meaning as distinct from image is awareness of something which is explicitly unobjective.

The next stage of subjectivity, spiritual subjectivity, begins, on Bhattacharyya's account, with feeling, and through introspection proceeds beyond introspection to the subject as freedom. Until now the subject was being experienced as being free from objectivity, but in this stage, it is experienced as realized freedom. Feeling is more subjective than the preceding stages insofar as it has no conscious reference to an object. In thought, content of thought appears to be distinct from the act of thinking itself, but in feeling the content of feeling is not given as distinct from the feeling itself. If feeling represents a complete dissociation from objectivity, willing is, for Bhattacharyya, a free identification with objectivity. If in the attitude of feeling, there is a withdrawal from the object, in the attitude of willing, there is a conquest over the object.

The level of subjectivity which is beyond all introspection is the silent self-enjoying 'I', the absolute intuitable self. In the higher stage of subjectivity, while there is a feeling of freedom, there is also more and more assurance in the possibility of actually achieving this freedom. In the intuitive experience of the self, this demand for realizing the subject as absolute freedom is felt, but not known. We are left unclear as to what the realization of subject as absolute freedom really is like, that is to say, if it is knowledge, or feeling, or willing. However, in his later writings, he clarifies his position further.

At the outset of his paper 'The Concept of the Absolute and its Alternative Forms',[33] Bhattacharyya declares that 'philosophy starts in reflective consciousness'.[34] Taking philosophy to be the rational analysis of experience, he points out that in reflection there is an awareness of a content that is related to consciousness. Bhattacharyya calls the mutual relation of reflective consciousness and its content 'implicational dualism'.[35] This relation of content and consciousness, however, is not final to reflection. There is a demand that the indefinite relation be defined, a demand that is possible only in supra-reflective consciousness.[36] The concept of the 'Absolute' falls within the realm of 'supra-reflective consciousness'. So one is left with the definition of the Absolute as that which is free from the implicational dualism of content and consciousness.[37] This may lead one to believe that for Bhattacharyya the Absolute involves an identity of content and consciousness. This, however, is not the case. Bhattacharyya argues that this implicatory distinction varies according to whether consciousness is knowing, willing, or feeling. Reflective consciousness is the only tool through which philosophy can reach out to the Absolute; one must accept knowledge (truth), willing (freedom), and feeling (value) as its three separate forms.

In his article 'The Concept of Philosophy', Bhattacharyya further clarifies his position. He attempts to arrive at a concept of knowledge by an analysis of thinking and speech. The task of philosophy is the justification of beliefs by a 'higher kind of knowledge' which can be reached by analysing speech and thinking. Speech and thinking admit of grades—consequently we get the grades of thought—and grades of thinking point to the grades of theoretic consciousness.[38] The belief that 'the Absolute is', is implied in theoretic consciousness of 'I am not'. The denial of 'I' is possible because of our belief that the Absolute *is*. Theoretic consciousness not only means that the Absolute (though positively believed) is negatively understood by way of symbols, but also implies that the Absolute is conceived as distinct from itself. With this in mind, Bhattacharyya argues that consciousness functions diversely, or better yet alternately, as knowing, willing, and feeling. The relation between consciousness and its content is different in each case. In knowing, the content is not constituted by consciousness. In willing, it is constituted by consciousness, and in feeling the content constitutes 'some kind of unity'[39] with consciousness. In each attitude the dualism of the content and consciousness can be overcome; consequently, each has its own formulation of the Absolute. In knowing, the content is freed from consciousness and the Absolute is truth. In willing, consciousness is freed from content and the Absolute is freedom. In feeling, there is a consciousness of unity and the Absolute is value. Thus, in his later writings, Bhattacharyya left room for three different paths reaching not the same but three different Absolutes, or supra-reflective consciousnesses.

While, in general, Indian philosophical thought has an objectivist conception of body (with the exception of, possibly, the Tāntric and the Yogācāra Buddhist analyses), Bhattacharyya's introduction of bodily subjectivity, quite independent of any influence from Western phenomenologists, has managed to move this idea to the centre of attention; this is no small achievement. We must remember at this juncture that bodily subjectivity is only a beginning; the freedom from objects that it announces is achieved through a series of steps, through which the subjective is increasingly internalized, until in the experience of transcendental consciousness, it is fully realized. Running throughout these stages is an understanding of subjectivity (possibly synonymous with consciousness) as that which dissociates itself from objects. The concept of dissociation has played an important role in Bhattacharyya's thinking; it provides something that the concept of intentionality lacks. Intentionality establishes an original relation of consciousness to the

world, but this relation threatens to overwhelm consciousness and transform it into a 'being in the world' (recall Heidegger's transformation of Husserl's thought). The idea of dissociation corrects this one-sidedness. Consciousness not only relates to the world but also tends to distantiate itself from it. Martin Buber characterized human existence by the twin concepts of '*Urdistanz*' and '*Beziehung*'. Bhattacharyya's idea of dissociation exactly develops this idea of *Urdistanz* along Vedāntic lines, while intentionality is the *Beziehung* or relatedness that Buber talks about. Consciousness, on Bhattacharyya's account, carries a felt freedom from its objects at every level until its final actualization in the Advaitic state of freedom.

J.N. Mohanty

Mohanty's thoughts on consciousness are best found in his early work *The Concept of Intentionality.*[40] In his later writings extending up to the 1990s, there are numerous discussions on consciousness, but they never come together in one piece, which can be easily referred to. Perhaps one perspicuous account is to be found in *The Empirical and the Transcendental: A Fusion of Horizons*, edited by this author.[41]

In Part III of his work, *The Concept of Intentionality*, Mohanty wrestles with the two major conceptions of consciousness found in the West and India alike, namely, those who understand consciousness in terms of intentionality and those who understand it in terms of reflexivity. He discusses the question of the relation between the two and wonders whether there is any 'sort of opposition', 'incompatibility', between the two. As a phenomenologist, he was impressed by perhaps the most important and the central theme of phenomenology, that is, its concept of intentionality. Brentano had held that all mental phenomena are distinguished by the fact that they alone are directed towards an object. Husserl further developed this idea through various phases and argued that everything in the world, and the world itself, derives its meaning from consciousness and its intentionality. Thus, it is not surprising that Mohanty in *The Concept of Intentionality* seems to be committed to the Brentano thesis that all consciousness is intentional. That in itself is nothing new; however, coming as he does from the tradition of Indian philosophy, which has been a major influence on his thinking, he had to come to terms with the question of the reflexivity of consciousness found in Vedānta. We saw in the last chapter that the Advaita school of Vedānta denies intentionality to consciousness. Śaṃkara, at the outset of this

commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, declares the mutual incompatibility of the subject and the object in no uncertain terms.[42] We noted earlier that the Advaitins took consciousness to be definable as self-shining or self-manifesting (*svayaṃprakāśa*), and to explain its object-directedness, they resorted to the idea of ignorance (*avidyā*). If consciousness is self-manifesting, it cannot be at the same time intentionally outward directed. Some phenomenologists have also emphasized the incompatibility between the two. Merleau-Ponty, for example, held that consciousness, if it were completely absorbed in the object, would cease to be consciousness. Thus, it is not surprising that in his early writings, Mohanty refused to admit any such non-intentional consciousness and attributed to faith the belief that intentionality may gradually disappear while consciousness will remain. Along with the issues of intentionality and reflexivity, another concern occupied Mohanty's mind in this work. He was concerned about finding a place for unconscious intentionalities within a consciousness, which is reflexive. It seems that he was led to this problem by thinking over the relation between Husserl and Freud (both of whom studied with Brentano), and in trying to find a solution for this, Mohanty was influenced by Ricoeur's works, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*[43] and *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation.*[44]

In response to the above challenges, Mohanty gives a twist to the concept of reflexivity, which he had appropriated from Brentano and Husserl. All consciousness is reflexive, that is to say, it always turns back on itself. Whereas Brentano and Husserl tend to construe this as another act, objectifying the primary act of consciousness, Mohanty uses the Advaita Vedāntic thesis of *svaprakāśatva*, especially the definition of *svaprakāśatva* as that which 'has the fitness of being immediately known without being an object of any cognition (*avedyatve sati aparokṣa vyavahāra yogyatvam svayamprakāśalakṣaṇam*)', to resolve this alleged incompatibility. In concrete terms, the Advaita thesis amounts to saying that consciousness is immediately experienced, even though it is not an object of knowledge. Mohanty suggests that the reflexivity of consciousness cannot be a second-order intentionality, but must be another, further irreducible, dimension of consciousness. In so doing, he succeeds in keeping together the two dimensions of consciousness: its intentionality or object-directedness and its reflexivity or self-manifestation. In view of these, Mohanty proposes that we recognize both degrees of intentionality and degrees of reflexivity. With this proposal, Mohanty not only wishes to make room for a great variety of

consciousness that we all experience as well as for the Freudian unconscious, but also to expand the scope of consciousness to include affective states such as pleasure and pain and volitional states such as wanting and willing. Keeping the above in mind, let me now turn to the specifics of his theory of the degrees of intentionality and the degrees of reflexivity.

First of all, he connects reflexivity to intentionality in such a way that in his view—which comes very close to Rāmānuja's—consciousness is self-manifesting only insofar as it is intentional. As is well known, Rāmānuja argues that consciousness manifests itself to its subject (*svāśrayaṃ prati*) at the time it is manifesting a subject (*viṣaya prakāśana belāyāṃ*). This means that my consciousness is not manifested to you; it is manifested only to me. It also means that my past consciousness is not manifested to me now, but can only be inferred. From this it also follows that consciousness which is not intentional is not self-manifesting. We must keep in mind that the thesis that only intentional consciousness is self-manifesting does not imply that all intentional consciousness is self-manifesting, because one's unconscious desires, beliefs, etc., are intentional. However, being unconscious, they are not self-manifesting. Accordingly, in his theory of intentionality and the degrees of reflexivity, Mohanty argues that while all consciousness is reflexive, this reflexivity has degrees which vary from full clarity to almost indistinct awareness. In the latter case, one is aware that something is there but one does not exactly know what it is. This would include within its fold such things as unconscious desires. A patient goes to a therapist being bothered by some mental problem; the purpose of psychoanalysis is to dig out the source of the patient's problem. The analyst and the patient together discover that the patient all along had an unconscious desire for something and it is this discovery which leads to therapeutic consequences. It is not as though something unknown was there and is now found out, but rather upon its discovery the patient recognizes that it was there all along, which suggests that there was a sort of reflexivity which never rose to the level of distinctness and clarity. Mohanty connects it with the way at first the unconscious desire, not yet attached to a definite object, stirs in the mind of the patient, and in the course of therapy attaches to a definite object and upon receiving assent from the patient becomes fully intentional, and recovers its full reflexivity as well. In other words, according to Mohanty, it is not as though the so-called unconscious desire, as unconscious, is a fully intentional state. It seems rather to be the case that it becomes a fully formed intentional state, that is to say, it acquires

a determinate object only through the process of therapy in which the analyst and the patients work together. Thus, on Mohanty's account the so-called unconscious is a low degree of reflexive consciousness, but not a negation or lack of consciousness. One could say that such intentionalities as those of bodily movements, the intentionality of emotional and affective life, are less transparent than the intentionality of knowledge. Thus with his theory of the degrees of reflexivity and the degrees of intentionality, Mohanty finds a framework for the Freudian theory of the unconscious within Husserl's phenomenology. In Mohanty's words:

> This principle helps us to grade the intentional states in a certain scale at the one end of which are the so-called unconscious states, followed by the purely bodily intentionality, the horizon or preconscious intentionalities, conscious intentionalities with their various gradations leading up, at the other end, to knowledge, the most free from any content, the most transparent of all intentionalities at the same time.[45]

Accordingly, in his *The Concept of Intentionality*, Mohanty arranges different states of consciousness in such a way that the more fully a state of consciousness is intentional, the more reflexive or self-manifesting it is. Mohanty argues that the degree of intentionality on his scheme varies with the degree of transparency of consciousness and both depend upon the presence or the absence of the hyletic component in the intentional experience. In other words: '... to the extent to which a state is intentional, i.e., to the extent to which it excludes opacity and approximates towards the completely empty consciousness, a consciousness that is in itself nothing, that is fully exhausted in its intentional function, is also the most intentional'.[46] In this scheme, the cognitive states come at the top while the so-called unconscious states remain at the bottom. Volitional and affective intentionalities fall in the middle. It is worth noting that in so doing, Mohanty is siding with the Buddhists, who regard these states as *modes* of consciousness, while rejecting the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Vedānta views, which regard these states as possible *objects* of consciousness. Mohanty returns to this idea of the 'degrees of intentionality' and the 'degrees of reflexivity' in the 1990s in the essay 'Phenomenology and Psychology'.[47]

In his later writings, in his interpretations of Indian philosophy and Husserl, Mohanty tries to come to grips with the relation between the empirical and the transcendental consciousness. While interpreting modern Western phenomenology, he arrives at the view (for which he finds support in Kant) that there are *not* two different levels of

consciousness, the empirical and the transcendental, but all consciousness in itself is transcendental.

> I reject the two-world theory. Consciousness is, in its innermost nature, transcendental—the same consciousness, which interprets itself, under strictly definable conditions as human, as biological and physiological, as bodily, as social, in brief, as empirical. I have fundamental objections to the way the distinction between the empirical and the transcendental is usually drawn, which misleadingly suggests as though the transcendental subjectivity is not the subject's experience of herself. The other member of the pair, that is, the 'empirical', also misleadingly suggests that one experiences only oneself as bodily and as a member of the natural and social orders. 'Experience', as I have said earlier, is multilayered. I experience myself as bodily, as an existent *Dasein*, as a part of nature, as subject to external causality, but also—once I bring into effect the *epochē*—as transcendental subjectivity. As transcendental, I am also a cognitive, affective and willing, acting, speaking and moving around, not a mere thinking ego.[48]

It is transcendental insofar as consciousness is not only intentional, that is to say, has objects, but also confers meaning on its object and to that extent interprets it. If there is any uninterpreted data in consciousness, data such as bare sensations, which Husserl calls '*hyle*', only may be purely empirical. But consciousness is not at any level merely receptive of such data, but always conceptualizes it, or interprets it, or gives it a meaning. In his reading of Indian philosophy, Mohanty holds, in kinship with the Buddhist view, that even transcendental consciousness is corporeal and may have a sensuous or hyletic component. It is nevertheless transcendental inasmuch as while it constitutes the objects, it is not a mere abstract substratum of manifestation but rather the concrete life of consciousness from which all interpretations have been removed. He holds that consciousness that is transcendental in this sense is identical with the empirical consciousness, with one difference: whereas the latter is subject to what Husserl called 'mundanizing apperception', the former is the same entity freed from such interpretation. This is Mohanty's understanding of Śaṃkar's thesis that the *jīva* is identical with the brahman. However, in order to sustain this reading he has to locate the so-called 'mundanizing apperception' in the very heart of transcendental consciousness, which is precisely what Advaita does when it makes *avidyā* rest upon consciousness.

The idea that progressively emerges in his thinking is an attempt to accommodate what we earlier called the Advaitic insight. In many of his later essays, for example, he makes a distinction between consciousness

and awareness—consciousness being intentional or object directed and awareness being the self-manifestedness which is not intentional but which accompanies intentional consciousness.[49] Such a thesis seems to make room for non-intentional consciousness, which, within the phenomenological movement, Michel Henry alone seems to have clearly recognized.[50] However, it must be pointed out, and Mohanty must come to grips with it, that recognition of a non-intentional 'awareness' must be made compatible with the earlier theory outlined in *The Concept of Intentionality*, where the reflexivity was made dependent on intentionality. It is difficult to see how Mohanty would accomplish this task, simply calling one 'awareness' and the other 'consciousness' might seem to be an easy way out.

Thus, we see that Mohanty, very much like Aurobindo and Bhattacharyya, tried to bring the insights of Indian philosophy into harmony with modern Western thinking, particularly in the field of phenomenology. He did this first in his book *The Concept of Intentionality*, and has persisted in this project through many subsequent writings. His concern has been to keep together two aspects of consciousness recognized in Indian thought: reflexivity (*svayaṃprakāśatva*) and intentionality (*saviṣayaktva*). Whereas Śaṃkara highlighted the mutual incompatibility of these two aspects, Mohanty proposes that we recognize that there are both the degrees of intentionality, and the degrees of reflexivity.

It is remarkable how all three contemporary philosophers discussed above straddle the chasm between phenomenology and metaphysics, without quite closing it. Śrī Aurobindo is at one end, in whom we find a metaphysics of consciousness in the grand Hegelian-Advaitic tradition, where one being (=spirit) goes through levels of self-manifestation, self-differentiation and then recovers its unity. At the other end is J.N. Mohanty who claims to give a purely phenomenological description of the way in which different states of consciousness, intentionality, and reflexivity are intertwined in different degrees. Claiming, as this theory does, to be a pure phenomenology, it does not proceed to make metaphysical claims regarding being, reality, and truth. In between the two stands K.C. Bhattacharyya, in a most remarkable way, uses a descriptive phenomenology to reach Advaitic metaphysics of self.

And yet all three share (1) a common thesis about levels of consciousness, and (2) a common recognition of bodily consciousness. The second thesis is particularly challenging, for recognizing bodily consciousness

(for Śrī Aurobindo, in addition, consciousness as involved in matter) runs against the traditional Advaitins' rejection of body as a product of ignorance. For Bhattacharyya, bodily subjectivity yields our first experience of freedom, which reaches its final end in the Advaita's experience of the 'self as freedom'. Body is no more rejected as unreal. Waking consciousness (which is centred in the body) is still a lower level of consciousness to be transcended in dream, dreamless sleep, and ecstasy. If they are different dimensions of consciousness, none is unreal, none is simply ignorance. The thesis of the grades of consciousness then may be a secure foundation to build upon.

What Indian philosophy still needs to do is appropriate these and other valuable insights gained from the tradition into a metaphysics based on our knowledge of brain and neurological sciences as well as physics of elementary particles. I have hope in the possibility of doing so.

Notes

1. Śrī Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (New York: Dutton, 1951), p. 947.

2. The non-dualistic Kāshmīr Śaivism is known as *Trika-Śāstra* or *Trika-Śāsana*. The term '*trika*' implies its acceptance of trinity or triad, whether it be *Śiva*, *Śakti*, and *nara*, or *parā*, *parāparā*, and *aparā*. The nature of ultimate reality is to manifest. 'If the Highest Reality did not manifest in infinite variety, but remained cooped up within its solid, singleness, it would neither be the Highest Power nor consciousness, but something like a jar.' Jaidev Singh's Introduction to *Śiva Sūtras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p. vi. *Parama Śiva* is an undivided undifferentiated unity of the 'I' and 'this'.

Parama Śiva has infinite powers. Nonetheless, there are five which are considered more fundamental than the others: *cit*, *ānanda*, *icchā*, *jñāna*, and *kriyā*. *Cit* is the power of self-revelation, the changeless principle behind all changes. In this aspect, the Ultimate Reality is known as *Śiva*. *Ānanda* is the absolute bliss and joy, which does not depend on anything external for its joy. In this aspect Ultimate Reality is known as *Śakti*. *Icchā* is the willpower to manifest the universe out of itself: a sort of divine resolve as to what to create. In this aspect, he is known as *Sadāśiva*. *Jñāna* is the power of knowing the relationship inherent in all finite objects of the world. In this aspect, the Ultimate Reality is known as *Īśvara*. And, finally, *kriyā* is the power to assume any form, i.e., to create. In this aspect, the Ultimate Reality is known as *Śuddhāvidyā* or *Sadavidyā*.

Thus, it is said that the universe is only an expansion of the power of *Parama Śiva*. Or, to put it differently, *Parama Śiva*, in his aspect as *Śakti* pervades

the universe thus produced, and at the same time remains transcendent without being affected in any shape or form by the manifestations of the universe. With the opening out of *Śakti*, the world appears; and disappears with its closing down. There have been countless universes before this and there will be many of these universes in the future. Creation and dissolution (*pralaya*) follow each other in an unending cyclic process, each successive universe an inevitable consequence of causes generated by the one preceding it by a kind of causal necessity.

Since there is nothing apart and independent of *Śiva*, the elements of the universe are nothing but *Śiva* himself. These elements are called *tattvas* and Śaivism maintains that there are altogether thirty-six principles as opposed to twenty-four of the Sāṃkhya system.

Parama Śiva has two aspects, viz., transcendental and immanent or creative. The creative aspect of *Parama Śiva* is known as *Śiva tattva*, the initial creative movement of *Parama Śiva*. The creation of the universe is in a sense self-limitation of *Śiva*, which is responsible for the polarity of 'subject' and 'object', *ahaṃ* and *idaṃ*. Initially, this dichotomy is ideal as it is in the form of an idea only. Therefore, it is called the pure order, i.e., manifestation in which the real nature of the Ultimate Reality is not veiled. However, after the primary self-limitation, *Śiva* undergoes a secondary limitation, where the play of *māyā* begins. From this stage onward, there is the impure order in which the real nature of the Ultimate Reality is concealed, and from which a real sense of difference emerges.

3. Abhinavagupta, *Parātrīśikā-Vivaraṇa: The Secret of Tantric Mysticism* (trans.) Jaidev Singh (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988), p. 35.
4. Ibid., p. 76.
5. Ibid., p. 80.
6. Ibid., pp. 84-5.
7. For a detailed discussion of Aurobindo's theory of evolution, see this author's 'Sri Aurobindo and his Theory of Spiritual Evolution: A Critical Appraisal', *Dialogue and Alliance*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter 1990–1.
8. *The Life Divine*, pp. 759–60.
9. Ibid., p. 759.
10. Ibid., p. 109.
11. Ibid., p. 833.
12. Ibid., p. 835.
13. Ibid., p. 840.
14. Ibid., p. 252.
15. Ibid., pp. 252–3.
16. Ibid., p. 843.
17. Ibid., p. 627.
18. Ibid., p. 591.

19. Ibid., p. 627.

20. Gopinath Bhattacharyya (ed.), *Studies in Philosophy* (Calcutta: Progressive Publishers), Vol. I, 1956 and Vol. II, 1958.

21. K.C. Bhattacharyya, *The Subject as Freedom* (Amalner, Bombay: Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1930). Reprinted in *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 367–454.

22. K.C. Bhattacharyya, 'The Concept of Philosophy', *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 457–79.

23. K.C. Bhattacharyya, 'The Concept of the Absolute and its Alternative Forms', ibid., pp. 121–43.

24. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, Introduction, *Studies in Philosophy*, p. xx.

25. K.C. Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Vedāntism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1907), p. 11. Reprinted in *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I, pp. 1–90.

26. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 12.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 14.

31. Ibid., p. 16.

32. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 412.

33. For a discussion of some of the important issues surrounding Bhattacharyya's conception of the Absolute in a clear and critical manner, see Bina Gupta, 'Alternative Forms of the Absolute: Truth, Freedom, and Value in K.C. Bhattacharyya', *International Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 20 (1980), pp. 291–306.

34. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 487.

35. The implicational relation of content and consciousness is different from the ordinary implication. In an ordinary implication, e.g., 'X implies Y', a relation exists between the former, which is definite and independent of implication, and the latter, which it implies. Unless the definite term 'X' is there, the relation cannot be one of implication. In the implicational relation of content and consciousness, no such definite term exists. Thus, in reflection, the relation of consciousness to itself as its content points to a factual relation or factual unity of which one at least is not really a term.

36. Bhattacharyya's second favourite word, after 'alternation', is 'demand', which appears frequently in his writings.

37. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 489–90.

38. Gopinath Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 463.

39. Ibid., p. 485.

40. J.N. Mohanty, *The Concept of Intentionality* (St Louis: Warren H. Green, Inc., 1972).

41. Bina Gupta (ed.), *The Empirical and the Transcendental: A Fusion of Horizons* (Lanham/Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001).

42. See *Adhyāsabhāṣya* of Śaṃkara's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*.

43. Ricoeur notes: 'A careful phenomenology of perception ... warns us against the simplicistic dilemma: either perception or awareness of oneself is identified and all I ever know is myself, or perception deals with the other than self and is unconscious, consciousness being posterior and super-added. ... the unconscious does not think, does not perceive, does not remember, does not judge. And yet, "something" is unconscious, something which is akin to perception, akin to memory, akin to judgement, and which is revealed in the analysis of dreams and neuroses. ... There is in that "something" that which sustains an act of perception, but that is not yet an act of perception but an impressional matter not yet brought to life by an intentional aim which would at the same time be a light for the self. Briefly, it is not yet a consciousness of ... Psychoanalysis forces us to admit that the infra-perceptive "impressions" can be dissociated from their corresponding intentionality and undergo alterations such that they are cloaked by an apparent meaning which seems absurd.' See Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (trans.) Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1979), pp. 387–8.

44. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (trans.) Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 375–95.

45. J.N. Mohanty, *The Concept of Intentionality*, p. 171.

46. Ibid.

47. Bina Gupta (ed.), *Explorations in Philosophy*, Vol. II (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).

48. Bina Gupta (ed.), *The Empirical and the Transcendental*, p. 261.

49. J.N. Mohanty, 'Knowledge and Ignorance', in Bina Gupta (ed.), *Explorations in Philosophy*, Vol. I (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

50. '*If the world phenomenalizes itself in the original revelation immanent to the act of original imagination, it is because consciousness of world is effective only upon the foundation in it of a consciousness to which the world does not belong. Consciousness of the world is always a consciousness without world.*' Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation* (trans.) Girard Etzkorn (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), p. 265. Also see, Section II, no. 2 and Appendix, no. 71.

7

Comparative Assessment
Questions, Criticisms, and Concluding Reflections

In this book, I have given an account of various theories of consciousness in Indian philosophy. In recent times, 'consciousness' has come to be a theme of major concern for Western philosophers. By making the concept of intentionality their central concern, phenomenologists have developed an elaborate theory of consciousness. Their methods of reduction and *epochē* have served to purify empirical consciousness of all naturalistic and objectivistic interpretations, while allowing for the emergence of a concept of consciousness which is both concrete and transcendental. Consciousness is taken by the phenomenologists who follow Husserl to be the constitutive source of all meanings. At the same time, this transcendental consciousness is also recognized as being a temporal flow. This temporality of transcendental consciousness is not only not the same as the temporality of worldly events and processes; it is also taken to be the underlying source of objective temporality. Finally, among analytic philosophers in the West and many philosophers of science, there is a renewed interest in the nature of consciousness. There was a time when consciousness was simply set aside as an 'epiphenomenon', as being completely reducible to physical processes. Today, philosophers and scientists reject this simplistic reductionism and wish to find a place for consciousness within the scheme of things, including a theory of the human brain.

In light of this renewed interest in the concept of consciousness, the Indian theories may be worth considering by philosophers of the Eastern and the Western persuasions alike. The Sāṃkhya and Vedānta theories unconditionally reject any kind of reduction of consciousness to matter or even to body. They also reject any possible account of causal origin of consciousness. However, they do not object to reducing mind to matter,

though they keep consciousness ontologically distinct from what remains outside the purview of such explanations of consciousness without which no brain states or physical states could amount to knowing. In this respect, the Advaita Vedānta thesis must be taken seriously, as much as the new Advaitic version of Śrī Aurobindo. The readers at this juncture might ask: What about the relevance of the Indian tradition for the other half of the contemporary Western thought, namely, phenomenology and all those philosophical perspectives that emerge out of phenomenology?

I

Going back almost a century before modern phenomenology, the principal achievements in Western thinking on consciousness are to be found in Kant and Hegel. I shall make a few remarks about how Indian theories of *cit* compare to them. To recall these conceptions briefly might help to situate Indian thinking in that context.

In Kant's philosophy, one has to distinguish between what he calls mental representations and consciousness. Mental representations are the sensations and intuitions ordered in space and time. The function of consciousness is to synthesize them by bringing them under concepts. According to Kant, consciousness has the function of synthesizing the sensory impressions received through the faculty of sensibility; he called the a priori forms of this synthesis the 'categories'. Consciousness has the primary function of synthesis. It is also an intellectual synthesis and insofar as it exercises these functions, it unifies not only the objects of knowledge but also itself under the form of what he calls the transcendental unity of apperception or the unity of self-consciousness. The unity of self-consciousness and the unity of objects are correlates, and both are functions of consciousness. Kant at times distinguishes between transcendental consciousness and empirical consciousness (in Kant's language 'transcendental apperception' and 'empirical apperception'), meaning by the latter the temporally ordered representations received by what he calls the 'inner sense'. But, strictly speaking, consciousness for Kant is transcendental inasmuch as it consists in the exercise of the function of synthesis.

The Kantian consciousness in synthesizing the data and welding them into judgements brings all human knowledge under the form of self-consciousness which he describes as 'I think'. There are four components of this process that I would like to emphasize in this context:

(1) consciousness is intellectual, better yet, thought; (2) consciousness is always, insofar as it produces judgements, self-conscious; (3) consciousness is always conscious of object; and (4) while human beings' inner mental life is incurably temporal, the modes of thinking are intellectual, that is to say, logical. A faculty of the mind called imagination mediates between the logical and the temporal by temporalizing the logical concepts of thought.

Hegelian philosophy introduced a new dimension to the thinking on the theme of consciousness. Building upon the foundations of Kant, Hegelian thinking first brought out that consciousness is a developing process and this development is historical. The history of consciousness which Hegel describes in his *Phenomenology* is the history of the different forms of consciousness that give shape to the world; each such form of consciousness along with its world is dialectically overcome by the one which appears next. This process is meant to prepare the ground, in Hegel's view, for the appearance of the Absolute Spirit in concrete human context in which the subject–object dualism of the earlier forms of consciousness is reconciled.

Indian philosophy generally lacks this idea of synthesis on the part of consciousness. Consciousness in the Indian tradition, despite the internal differences among various schools, is never construed as a purely intellectual thinking. The Western idea of *thought* as a separate and autonomous faculty is difficult to render into Sanskrit philosophical language. One searches in vain for an equivalent of the word '*reason*' or *Vernunft* in Sanskrit. Closest perhaps is the Sanskrit term '*buddhi*'. Consciousness does not construct its objects; it is meant to present its objects as they are. Consciousness in the Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism manifests its object and also manifests itself. Whether one considers the realist schools of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā, or at the other end the school of Advaita Vedānta, consciousness does not manufacture its object. It simply reveals it. This shows that there is a strong element of realism in Indian thinking. It is only in Buddhism that one finds views very similar to Kantian views. With the exception of Buddhism, especially the Buddhism of Dignāga, we do not encounter a Kantian-like doctrine of categories in Indian thought. Yogācāra Buddhists argue for the identity of the object as well as of the subject; both are constructs, although in detail, namely, in the theory of the forms of the construction or the categories, the Buddhist and the Kantian accounts are different. The Kantian thesis that all consciousness is self-consciousness seems to have a close resonance to the Buddhist idea of *svasaṃvedana* and the Vedānta

idea of *svayamprakāśa*, which, as shown earlier, is different from the Kantian description of it as 'I think'. The themes of time and history, as they are found in the Western idea of historicity of consciousness—that gradually came to dominate Western thinking in the nineteenth century—do not find explicit recognition in Indian thought. However, what has not been thematized may be discovered in the margins. The way the traditional texts and inherited interpretations have been taken over into philosophical thinking shows that consciousness does not escape history, even when it does not think of itself as historical.

II

If we look at the conceptions of consciousness dominant in Western thought since the early decades of the twentieth century, we find remarkable affinities, as well as differences from, the Indian account of consciousness.

With the advent of modern phenomenology, several themes with regard to consciousness came to prominence. First, of course, is the thesis of intentionality, namely, that consciousness is directed towards some object or the other. Second, as a consequence of the first, consciousness, when referring to its object, generates a meaning, which it ascribes to the object. Carried a step further, it amounts to the thesis that consciousness is always consciousness of meaning. Third, consciousness always has an external and an internal horizon. Any object, that it presents, is located in a field, which in the long run, is the world as the ultimate horizon for all objects. Fourth, unlike in Kant, there is also a purely sensuous or hyletic component of consciousness even in the most intellectual of our thoughts. One need not posit the pure Kantian concepts and then invoke imagination to temporalize them. Rather consciousness is always imaginative and temporal. Compared to pure logical thinking, which is a higher level idealization, this thesis seems like an inversion of Kantian thesis. Consciousness, though not an explicit 'I think', always has an implicit self-awareness which one can transform into an explicit reflection. Irrespective of whether it is reflective or not, all consciousness is temporal, the 'now' sinking back into the 'no more', and always anticipating the 'not yet'. The temporality resists a full reflective grasp by consciousness of itself, so that reflection is aware of its incompleteness and never rises to the level of Hegelian absolute knowledge.

This entire system of thought as summarized in the above paragraph has many more dimensions and inner variations; it is not possible to discuss all in this short exposition. I shall, however, draw the attention of my readers to two most influential variations: (1) Merleau-Ponty's idea of bodily subjectivity preceding and accompanying all intellectual consciousness, and (2) the emphasis, though sometime carried to an extreme, on the idea that the temporality of consciousness never permits consciousness to be presented as a 'now', but always grasped as what is no more, always anticipating what is not yet. What is thereby pushed to the forefront is not self-consciousness but rather the *trace* that is perpetually being left behind by the vanishing flow of consciousness.

This entire constellation of thoughts seems to have placed Western philosophy in a terrain that is closer to the Indian thinking. Leaving aside the extreme Advaita Vedānta purification of consciousness into a mere principle of manifestation, and consequent reduction of the body to an object, Indian thinking on consciousness abounds in concerns and concepts which squarely fall in this terrain. First, consider body. As stated earlier, while the mainstream *darśanas* tended to regard the body as a thing, as an object, in many modes of thinking and highly influential modes of practice, bodily subjectivity came to the forefront. While a certain understanding of yogic practice consisted in seemingly manipulating the body as one manipulates a machine, much of Yogācāra Buddhism, for example, would remain unintelligible unless one associates with body its own specific modes of consciousness distributed over the areas of body in different ways. Body is not merely an instrument for controlling the mind and focusing the attention; it is in itself, the seat of consciousness which can be accentuated or intensified by releasing its potentialities from the clutches of habitual objectification. In this regard, Śrī Aurobindo and Bhattacharyya discover their ideas of bodily consciousness and bodily subjectivity respectively from within the Indian traditions. The Buddhists carried it further by holding that each and every *vijñāna* has a hyletic component and by not reducing consciousness to the merely mental. The Buddhist emphasis on traces (*saṃskāras*) inherited from what has ceased to exist and transmitted to what is not yet, has the potentiality of developing into a rich phenomenology of experience of time, and only in Buddhism, if not anywhere else, does a certain grasp of the historicity of consciousness tend to emerge.

As regards intentionality, I have already referred to the various forms in which it appears in Indian thought. Again, Advaita Vedānta stands at one end, by transferring all objective reference to be a construction of

ignorance superimposed upon the pure self, that is, the being of consciousness. The other schools, especially the realist schools, such as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā, clearly recognize the intentionality of cognitive states, which they construed as consciousness. Pleasure and pain, desiring and willing, excluded from the scope of consciousness, were denied their own intentionality, as though a state of pleasure derived its object only from a prior representation. It is only the Buddhists who recognized pleasure and pain, desires and will, to be the modes of consciousness having their own intentional structure. However, the phenomenologists' other thesis that every intentionality is accompanied by a consciousness of meaning so that all intentional objects are meaningful objects is difficult to find in Indian thought. It is beyond the scope of this essay to make use of the Indian theories of meaning in this context but it may be said that meaning, for all Indian thinkers, with the exception of the Buddhist theory of meaning, was identical with reference. Consequently, there was no possibility of letting a layer of meaning intervene between consciousness and its object. But let us quickly note what the Buddhists did in this regard. Leaving out the very early Sarvāstivādins, the Buddhists cast suspicion on words claiming to be directly referring to objects and did not wish to introduce a positive meaning entity to mediate, because that would contradict its denial of abstract entities, and so they construed meanings to be only negations. According to their well-known theory of *apoha*, the word 'cow' means neither particular cows nor the universal cowness, but rather mere exclusion of non-cows. Like the notion of trace, the *apoha* theory of meaning gives priority to absence over presence and brings the Buddhists close to the Derridian '*differanz*'. Nevertheless, unlike the Derridians, the Buddhist still continues to speak of *vijñapti*, that is to say, of consciousness and cognition. That locution hides the radical nature of the Buddhist thinking and yet uses conservative or traditional mode of speech. Each such *vijñapti* is different from, that is to say, is separated by a negation from what precedes and what succeeds. It does not, therefore, have a positive self-being; its being consists in not being what it is not. Using a radical mode of speech, one could then say that consciousness for the Buddhists consists in perpetual self-negation. If this were the only thing about the Buddhist view of consciousness, Buddhism could have been a very early anticipation of Derridian thinking. But this does not tell the whole story; it only provides a partial picture. There is another aspect of *svasaṃvedana*, which makes each *vijñapti* self-aware while it is on the point of vanishing. How these two aspects may be kept together has been a problem for the Buddhist psychology,

and also perhaps, for the Buddhist meditational practices. At various places, on various occasions, in this book, I have talked about phenomenology vis-à-vis the Indian theories of consciousness. Before concluding this section, I would like to make a few remarks to bring those points together, especially with regard to Advaita Vedānta and Husserlian phenomenology. Insofar as Advaita Vedānta is concerned, our comparisons have brought out the following points:

1. For Advaita Vedānta, consciousness is neither intentional nor egological. It is *nirviṣaya* and *nirāśraya*. For Husserl, on the other hand, consciousness is intentional and belongs to an ego.
2. For Advaita Vedānta, consciousness is self-luminous and cannot be made an object without doing violence to its nature. Husserlian phenomenology is in this matter ambiguous. On the one hand, Husserl holds that consciousness can be reflected upon, and, on the other hand, he also takes it to have a pre-reflective transparency.
3. For Advaita Vedānta, consciousness is timeless. For Husserl, consciousness is intrinsically temporal and is often described by him as a flux.
4. For Advaita Vedānta, the mundane world of objects is superimposed upon consciousness; for Husserl, consciousness constitutes the world by conferring meaning upon the empirical data.
5. For Advaita Vedānta, consciousness is empty of all contents, *nirākāra*; it is the *antaḥkaraṇa* that assumes the form of the object. For Husserl, consciousness is content-ful (*inhaltich*), concrete at the most basic level, sensible and sensuous, and always, at any level, including the level of conceptual thinking, has a hyletic component.

While these five points serve to draw an initial line of comparison between Advaita Vedānta and Husserl, so far as the nature of consciousness is concerned, this initial difference is considerably modified when we delve deeper into the two philosophies. I can only indicate the direction our final comparison will traverse.

1. Even for Husserl, while the surface level of the acts (such as believing, perceiving, hoping, and desiring) exhibits intentionality, the intentional acts are constituted out of a flux of experience, which is not itself intentional. The hyletic data,

the horizonal references, the time-constituting flow, are not themselves intentional, in the same sense in which the acts are intentional. Likewise, while an initial description recognizes that acts belong to an ego, the ego is constituted out of experiences, habitualities, passive associations which themselves are not egological.

2. Although phenomenology remains initially a reflective philosophy, it has to—as a matter of fact it does (as with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Michel Henry)—succeed in taking hold of pre-reflective transparence of consciousness.
3. While for Husserl, consciousness is temporal, this temporality is not to be confused with being-in-time of objective events and processes. Transcendental consciousness, for Husserl, disclosed after the mundane world (of outer as well as of inner events) is bracketed; it is not in time, but rather the origin of temporality. Though Husserl also describes it as a flux, he also characterizes it as both streaming and standing. It appears he was not too far from the Advaita Vedāntic idea of the timelessness of consciousness, from the 'eternal now' of Plotinus.
4. Advaita Vedānta cannot speak of the constitution of meanings. Indian philosophy does not, in general (with few minor exceptions), have a theory of meaning as distinguished from reference. In addition, what constitutes the world is ignorance or *avidyā*. I must, however, concede that it is possible to interpret the doctrine of 'superimposition' as a theory of constitution. As least such a reading is possible, if not usual.[1]
5. The Advaitic consciousness has no hyletic component; it is empty of all contents and it is the mere principle of manifestation. Husserlian consciousness is much closer to the Buddhist *vijñāna*, which is also hyletic and yet self-luminous (*svasaṃvedana*). In this regard, phenomenology and Yogācāra are in close proximity—both are far removed from Advaita Vedānta in this regard.

III

In the last few years, there has been a powerful philosophical trend which may be called physicalism along with many speculations about

where consciousness is to be located in the neuro-physiological system. Also, there are three very influential points of view from which the idea of consciousness is now being critiqued. Two of these are philosophical and the third is scientific. I will begin with the two philosophical criticisms, and then, briefly assess how Indian tradition might respond to these modern critics of consciousness.

Heidegger and his followers provide the first one. They argue that the idea of consciousness is based upon three assumptions. First, the idea of consciousness is inseparable from the idea of the inner as opposed to the outer and so tied to the Cartesian dualism. Second, it is also connected to the idea of representation, that is, the inner picturing of the outer world. Third, it is based upon a conception of time as present while overlooking the importance of the past and the future. Rejecting these three assumptions of the philosophy of consciousness, Heidegger suggests the priority of *Dasein,* that is to say, of human existence as being in the world instead of being a subject for which the world is an object. As contrasted with consciousness, which is a subject in whom the world is pictured, *Dasein* is tied to its world by 'caring' and 'concern'. *Dasein's* being, unlike consciousness, which is present to itself, rather consists in being ahead of itself in its projects and in the long run is a being towards death.

Heidegger's concept of *Dasein* is true of the empirical human person involved in the chain of *saṃsāra.* He/She is a being who acts, enjoys, and suffers, and if he/she knows, his/her knowledge is only instrumental to achieving his/her goal. He/She is not a pure cognitive subject, for he/she is always interested and always following his/her practical projects. So far Heidegger gives a good account of the empirical person, although it is not an exaggeration to say that his account also contains overtones derived from the Christian theology and the predicament of the twentieth-century European humankind. In the Indian tradition, however, the worldly being of the empirical person does not quite displace consciousness (consciousness both of herself and of her world, which accompanies all her practical projects). The presence of consciousness not only allows for the possibility of reflection (e.g., what am I doing or is it all worth anything?), and of taking distance from one's cares and concerns, but also suggests a path following which one could proceed to explore the deeper dimensions of one's being. Consciousness, on the Indian account, is not merely the inner as opposed to the outer—although it is that to begin with—but it also becomes the stuff of which all things are made, thereby going beyond the Cartesian dualism.

The second philosophical criticism of the idea of consciousness comes from the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who begins with some of the ideas of Heidegger mentioned above and pursues them to their utmost limit. By doing this, he may be said to have deconstructed the idea of consciousness. It is worth noting here that consciousness, as Heidegger argues, is self-presence: in my consciousness, I am present to myself. Both the Advaita Vedānta philosophical tradition and Western phenomenology were committed to such a view of consciousness, according to which consciousness, at any moment, is fully present to itself. In Husserl's well-known account of time consciousness, consciousness is always of a 'now' even when it is a consciousness of 'no longer' and 'not yet'. The total structure is that of the living present with the now as its core and 'no longer' and 'not yet' at its fringes. The question arises: does the German word '*Augenblick*' (blinking of an eye) or the Indian thinker's use of the word *kṣaṇa* (moment) refer to an indivisible unit or moment, or does the metaphor also hide not only the presence of the present but also the absence of the absent? By raising this sort of questions, Derrida wishes to draw our attention to the fact that in our search for pure presence, we are after a will-o'-the-wisp, which we never find and all that we find is absence and the mere trace of the vanishing present. The idea of pure presence is a metaphysical thesis, which is often called metaphysics of presence. It seems as though phenomenological evidence dose not warrant such metaphysics. What we have at the bottom of things is just the absence, the difference, the trace, and not identity, self-coincidence, and pure presence. But the resulting position also may be regarded as metaphysics, albeit, this time a metaphysics of absence which reifies absence into what Derrida calls '*differanz*'. The idea of trace, which Derrida uses, he borrows from Immanuel Levinas. Describing Abraham's seeing of God, Levinas wrote that he had not seen God's presence, his face, but only his vanishing back. It seems both Derrida and Levinas wish to avoid an objectification of the other as well as of oneself by banishing 'pure presence'. The giving of priority to absence, to trace, seems to promise an escape from such objectification.

I wish to recall for my readers that we had encountered such a notion of trace and the continual vanishing of the present in the exposition of Buddhism. However, there are several considerations—both logical and phenomenological—which should enable us to offer a critique of Derrida from the standpoint of Indian tradition. First of all, a trace is the trace of what was present before and is no more. One cannot simply have traces

of traces of traces without going back to the present to which the series of traces belong. Derrida recognizes such a search for origin, but regards it as an endless search never to reach its goal. In this sense, he considers Husserl's ideal of pure evidence unreachable. But this only shows that at the level of objective cognition, we never reach the sort of givenness or originary evidence which Husserl was in search of. But at a higher level, is not Derrida making use of the presence of the series of traces to consciousness? Is he not basing his thesis upon the failure to find objective presence, and is not this failure itself presented to consciousness? The fact that the alleged 'now' is always interpenetrated by the 'just gone' and the 'not yet', is not this (now–not yet) structure itself, even when it is vanishing, presented to consciousness as what abides in the midst of the flux of change? The point that I am trying to make is as follows: just as there is consciousness of presence, there is also a consciousness of absence, and a consciousness of their difference; if Derrida's critique is not to be arbitrary but rather justified by evidence, or the failure of evidence, such evidence or failure of it must be presented to consciousness with regard to the objective world, objective knowledge, objective beliefs. Derrida's critique of the impossibility of complete validation is justified from the point of view of Advaita. But such justification presupposes the presence of a witness-consciousness to which all affirmations as well as negations must be presented and without which no trace will be presented as a trace.

The scientific criticism is generally levelled from the perspective of either a physicalist or a biological evolutionist. There are several forms of physicalism, many of which are well known since ancient times, and there is no need to go into various varieties of it. For the physicalist, the world is physical and has no place for things or properties, which follow no known physical laws. The prospects for physicalism today seem to be much better than before, partly because of the great developments in science, especially the neuro-sciences. One heartening feature of recent thought about consciousness is that many scientists and philosophers today do not simply dismiss consciousness as an epiphenomenon or as something which can be eliminated; they are looking for the neuro-basis—for example, of a possible gene—of consciousness. The evolutionary biologist looks for the evolutionary development of the human brain, which becomes the seat of consciousness. It is not needed for my present purposes that I go into these theories in detail. A few remarks, however, on such scientific criticisms, again from the point of view of Advaita thinking on consciousness, would not be out of place.

It is not in any straightforward sense that modern physics is physicalistic. The elementary particles, as understood by quantum mechanics, are so unlike our ordinary material bodies that it may not be totally wrong to say that modern physics has led to a 'dematerialization of matter'. While it may be naïve to claim that modern physics demonstrates the presence of consciousness in all matter in howsoever small a degree, we can only say this much that the gap between consciousness and matter is much narrower than ever before. Many scientists have speculated that if consciousness is to be explained by the brain sciences, we have to first know more about the quantum mechanical nature of the brain. But even then the sciences would not show that matter or the physical structure of the brain produces consciousness, but all the scientific facts would be compatible with the thesis that physical structure of the brain is an appropriate medium for the emergence and manifestation of consciousness in a biological organism.

Among the Indian thinkers, Śrī Aurobindo maintained that the evolution of nature leads to the manifestation of human consciousness only because consciousness was already implicit in the material nature. Such a position would be compatible with the Advaita view of things. The Advaitic standpoint need not deny science, nor does it need to concern itself with a scientific explanation of consciousness. It, however, would not allow that physicalism is the only promising interpretation of science. On the other hand, it would claim that taking all the facts into account—not only the facts of science but also the facts of the higher reaches of consciousness—a Vedāntic theory of the universality of consciousness might well claim to be a more satisfactory interpretation.

The same can be said about the evolutionary theory. Evolution does not explain the emergence of consciousness; it explains—through the gradual sophistication of human brain—the specifically human form of consciousness, individualized, capable of strategic thinking for survival. Here again, this narrowly formulated consciousness in terms of the survival of the human species is severely restricted to yield a general theory of the nature of consciousness. It is as if the account of the nature of the kerosene lamp and the science that it implies could be used to understand the nature of the sun from which our planet derives its light. The Indian philosophers theorized about that original consciousness which under specific condition of human body becomes a human consciousness. The Indian philosophers no doubt began with human consciousness but proceeded to find in it signs of its origin, source, and true essence which is none other than the universal, all-pervasive, consciousness.

IV

The task for Indian philosophers is not merely to rethink the traditional ideas about consciousness, but also to use them to meet contemporary challenges from psychology, biology, genetics, and physics; it should attempt to expand its concerns to the domain of social and political life. I formulate below some of the questions which, I believe, Indian philosophers should consider.

1. Do the elementary particles of matter, in their unpredictable behaviour, suggest that they offer a limit to a physicalist ontology and point towards the primacy of a low-grade consciousness?
2. Inasmuch as consciousness is not only individual but also collective, can the Indian tradition accommodate the idea of the fusion of consciousnesses, which makes possible the identity of a community or of a political entity?
3. Since the Indian tradition extended its theory of consciousness into the practical project of transforming one's existence through yogic and meditative practices, is it possible to further extend it in the direction of social and collective actions, such as the movement launched by Gandhi?
4. Śrī Aurobindo took the idea of transformation a step further in recommending the ideal of collective liberation. What sort of a theory of consciousness does this entail?
5. In the context of psychology, one must come to grips with the following question: what modes of trans-personal communication are available, breaking open the normal boundaries that circumscribe personal consciousness?
6. What are the implications of the Vedāntic thesis that *cit* is also bliss for the way the individual searches for happiness?
7. How are consciousness and the karmic elements transmitted through birth and death? Can one's birth and death be possible phenomena for oneself, or are they inherently intersubjective? Is the foetus in the mother's womb conscious? Such questions are not new to the Indian tradition, but, now they may be discussed by philosophers.

In discussing all these questions, is it possible to avoid taking into account the way the mystic and spiritual experiences in all traditions

claim to open the 'doors of perception' and 'dimensions of consciousness'? Or, should philosophers restrict themselves to ordinary consciousness and leave out the extraordinary?

The Indian tradition has not neglected either the ordinary or the extraordinary; both Vedānta and Buddhism seem to have found places for both components in their philosophies. Do the Indian philosophers of today, in the absence of personal access to the higher reaches of experience, have the competence to honestly integrate them into their thinking on consciousness?

It is not possible in this concluding section to undertake a detailed discussion of the issues the above questions raise. However, I shall suggest some responses to the questions above in the order in which they have been raised in the hope that it steers those who are willing to pursue the ramifications of these questions in the right direction.

1. Yes, they do offer a limit to physicalist ontology. The elementary particles do not seem to be pieces of matter—they seem to defy our ordinary concept of material bodies. But at the same time, one should admit that to go to the opposite extreme and hold that the elementary particles are conscious beings or possess consciousness is to make a mistake. No empirical evidence available points in this direction. The category which perhaps comes closest to fit their behaviour is '*prāṇa*' of the Upaniṣads rather than '*cit*'. In the Upaniṣads, it is said '*sarvam prāṇa ejati*' (everything throbs with *prāṇa*). To decide how *cit* fares in this context requires first deciding the relation between *prāṇa* and *cit* and that is something I cannot do here.
2. It seems to me that from the point of view of karma and rebirth, the various individual souls and their karmas by their interaction with each other may be regarded as making possible a community of humankind as a whole. But politics and history not only require that humankind be an interacting collection of the embodied souls, but also that there is a possibility of social groups, like Hindus, Buddhists, Chinese. The formation of these communities would need more specific principles than the way karma and rebirth operate. It requires that a common tradition, religion, or language unite the members, so that there is a common way of looking at things, a common set of beliefs. This makes it imperative that the individual consciousnesses

are not totally, exclusively, individual, that they share some structures. Western thinking has been very much individualistic. Consciousness has been regarded as private to each individual, thereby resulting in raising a host of questions regarding the possibility of social consciousness. The Indian theories of consciousness, which have been expounded in this book, do not restrict consciousness to an individual's mental experience, but conceive of various levels of consciousness, from the purely individualized sensory experience through the conceptual being, that is, the level of *buddhi*, and the *cit* as the metaphysical stuff, of which, according to Advaita Vedānta, all things are made. When consciousness is understood in this wide sense, it does not merely serve to separate one individual from another but also to unite them by making possible not only unity of humans and nature but also the unity of one human to another at all different levels.

3. As noted in my answer to questions 2, there are many levels of consciousness on the Indian account, and the spiritual practices are designed to help human beings transform the lower levels of consciousness, for example, the sensuous level, into the higher level, for example, *cit.* In the traditional Indian culture, this transformation of consciousness has been taken to be the transformation of the individual nature from the sensuous animal that he is, to begin with, to the spiritual and the moral person that he has the potentiality to become. However, Indian culture, in general, did not thematize the possibility of a similar transformation of society. I think it was taken for granted that if individuals change for the better, society will change for the better. But such a conception presupposes that a society is a collection of its individuals, which has been questioned on many grounds. The question under consideration is whether the spiritual transformation of an individual consciousness can lead to or can be used as a means to transform the nature of society, without making use of the purely individualistic presupposition just mentioned. I think both Gandhi and the Buddhist tradition emphasized such a possibility. By purging consciousness of individualistic defilements such as greed, and by cultivating such excellences as compassion, one can transform the basis on which our society could be founded. A philosophy which regards each individual as an exclusive domain of private interest cannot have a way to promote

public good except through the use of force. However, if consciousness, by definition, is not the domain of exclusive privacy, but rather of shared interests, such a possibility is perfectly feasible.

4. Śrī Aurobindo's theory of collective liberation or, as he calls it, 'the ascent of mankind to a higher evolutionary level', is based upon two different theories found in the texts of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. The first of these is the conception of *cit* as force or *śakti*, which develops and manifests itself through various stages, both in nature and in human history. The second theory holds that evolution, whether of nature or of man always proceeds in three steps: the lower ascends to a higher level, that ascent in turn making the next step possible, which is the descent of the higher into the lower; this is followed by the step in which the higher by descending into the lower transforms it. Thus, for example, purely inorganic matter develops enough of complexity (which is ascent) in order to make possible the descent of life (*prāṇa*) into the material body. But the descent of *prāṇa* does not leave the matter at the level it was, but transforms inorganic matter into organic matter. Śrī Aurobindo argues that the same applies to *cit* or consciousness. The descent of the higher forms of consciousness into material framework would end up, he visualizes, by transforming human body, life, and mind appropriately. In his view, such a conception of the emergence of higher levels of *cit* is clearly anticipated.
5. There is a widespread prejudice among Western philosophers that any language of consciousness is bound to be Cartesian, thereby making consciousness accessible only to the ego who owns it. The other ego, on this account, has no access to one's consciousness. Such an account makes communication between the egos at worst impossible, and at best highly unreliable. To account for the possibility of communication, philosophers have, therefore, appealed to publicly observable practices, such as language, and have replaced consciousness by observable behaviour. But with this cure, one also destroys the patient, or to use another metaphor, throws the baby with the bath water. In assuming that consciousness is incurably Cartesian, one overlooks the multifarious ways in which consciousnesses come into contact with each other, understand

each other, recognize each other, and respond to thoughts and emotions of others. Body is not simply a container of consciousness, or even an external sign for internal consciousness, but carries with it a mode of consciousness which may be called bodily consciousness. Two bodies attuned to each other understand each other's desires and aspirations. The same is true of two living beings. The point that I am trying to make is that each level of consciousness, bodily, intellectual, for example, has its mode of communication with the other. It opens out to the other in its own way without closing itself into an inaccessible domain. It seems to me that in Indian philosophy—where *cit* is an ontological category, especially in the Vedānta tradition, where *cit* is the stuff of which everything is made—the Cartesian idea of consciousness will be totally rejected. The Vedāntic theory is compatible with—may even be taken to entail—modes of non-sensory, direct, and immediate contact with other centres of consciousness. The more one frees oneself from the narrow limits to which one's egoistic consciousness is seemingly confined, the more one enjoys one's harmony with other consciousnesses. At its higher reaches, consciousness is trans-personal, not egoistic.

6. Egoistic consciousness searches for happiness from things in the world which, by being acquired or brought under control, confirm one's sense of 'I'. To confirm one's sense of ego is to strengthen one's 'power' and to increase the 'pleasure' which one derives from things of the world. Little does one realize that this pursuit of 'power' and 'pleasure' eventually turns back upon itself, leading to 'powerlessness' and 'pain'. The things which were acquired to give one power end up by controlling one, leaving one powerless. Likewise, what filled the ego with pleasure ends up by being a source of pain, which is Lao-Tzu's eternal return. The Vedāntin, therefore, searches for happiness within one's consciousness, not in the objects of consciousness. But this consciousness in which the Vedāntin seeks happiness is not the narrow egoistic consciousness, but that vast, expansive, universal consciousness, which 'finds itself in others and others in itself'. Cultivation of this universality, or rather realization of it, requires breaking down the barriers that separate an ego from other egos, 'mine' from 'yours', 'my

happiness' from 'their happiness'. The person who achieves this Vedāntic goal experiences true bliss within herself.

7. This is the most difficult of all the questions asked here. For, any attempt to answer this question would have to establish an intelligible link between the two domains: the karmic and the naturalistic. None of the theories in Indian philosophy has adequately discussed this large issue, save possibly the Buddhist. In their detailed discussions of the twelve-membered chain of dependent origination, the Buddhists not only saw the problem, they sought to throw some light on it. In their analysis, the twelve-membered chain that encompasses this life, goes back to the previous life/death, and the embryonic consciousness in which the karmic elements are latently present. But how is this done?

   The question has two parts: a general question as to how consciousness is transmitted, and a more specific question as to what are the karmic elements. The way the parents' egg and sperm get together resulting in the conception that takes place must be a part of the process. The way the genes of the parents, and their DNA, are transmitted is also part of the micro-process. One believes, one therewith understands how character traits, cognitive abilities, and physiological features are transmitted. If one understands these, one *must understand* how consciousness is transmitted. The foetus must have latent consciousness, to be actualized with the developmental process. While the transmission of consciousness must be at this level, the transmission of the karmic elements will require a different level of conceptualization. For, if it were the karmic elements of the two parents whose transmission is the question at issue, we could have had a part of the story with that account of genetic inheritance. But the soul which is being reborn as the foetus had different karmic elements, and we are left with the puzzle about how the karmic elements of X could be transmitted to the foetus Y, when the parents A and B produce Y. Did then the karmic elements of X enter into the parent's egg and sperm *ab extra*? Or, should we rather say that a foetus Y, which is to incorporate the karmic elements of X (so that we could say Y is but X reborn) required that Y be born from precisely these two parents A and B? The story gets muddled, and we realize that we need a science—and not mere

conceptual clarity—which connects two different ontological levels. And our knowledge of this is far too limited. To extend the story a little further: if X's karma required that Y be born of A and B, the karmas of A and B also require that their foetus Y (which not only must be inheriting some of their karmas) must be identical with X qua reborn (and so must inherit X's karmic elements, in addition). One may also go ahead and maintain that the fact that Y is born in a specific cultural community with specific traditions, and with specific intellectual and moral predilections, be rooted as much in the genetic inheritances from A and B as in the karmic inheritances from A, B, and X. Does such a story suggest that a purely individualized notion of karma must be inadequate, that karmas must affect groups, and collective entities, and in the long run the entire domain of humankind, possibly of living beings? This is a field in which there is scope for further research, and for speculative construction of a system that satisfactorily combines Vedānta with the eschatological ideas of karma, rebirth and mokṣa.

Notes

1. Anindita Niyogi Balslev, 'Analysis of I-Consciousness in the Transcendental Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy' in D.P. Chattopadhyaya, Lester Embree and J.N. Mohanty (eds) *Phenomenology and Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1992), pp. 133–40.

Abbreviations

AS	*Advaitasiddhi*. New Delhi: Parimal Publications.
BP	*Bhāṣā-Pariccheda with Siddhānta-Muktāvali*. Advaita Ashram edition.
BSBh	*Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya of Śri Saṅkarācārya*
BU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
CU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*
MAU	*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*
MU	*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
NS	*Nyāya Sūtras*
PPV	*Pañcapādikāvivaraṇa*. Madras Government Manuscripts Library edition.
SB	*Siddhāntabindu of Madhusūdana with the Commentary of Purushottama*. Gaekward Oriental edition.
SLS	*Siddhāntaleśasaṅgraha*. Madras University Series edition.
Śvetā	*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*
TS	*Triṃśikā*
TSD	*Tarka-Saṃgraha of Annaṃbhaṭṭa with Dīpīka*. Calcutta: Progressive Publishers.
TSDNB	*Tarka-Saṃgraha of Annaṃbhaṭṭa with Dīpīka and Govardhana's Nyāya-Bodhinī*. Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series edition.
TP	*Tattvapradīpikā*
TU	*Tattirīya Upaniṣad*
Upadeśa	*Upadeśasāhasrī*

VP	*Vedānta Paribhāṣā*
VPS	*Vivaraṇaprameyasaṃgraha*. Kumbakonam edition.
VV	*Viṃśatikā*

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